The Politics of Policy-Making:

Children's Services Reform (1997-2015)

Carl Anthony Purcell

Abstract

This thesis questions the two dominant theoretical perspectives on contemporary British policy-making, Rhodes' (1997) Differentiated Polity Model (DPM) and Marsh et al's (2001; 2003) Asymmetric Power Model (APM). Rhodes emphasises the influence of autonomous non-governmental policy networks over the policy-making process. Challenging this view, Marsh et al claim that public policy is largely determined by an administrative elite based in Whitehall departments. Inspired by Moran's (2007) theory of the British regulatory state, this research asks whether or not British policy-making is a more politically-driven process than either the DPM or the APM acknowledge. Responding to this question requires an in-depth longitudinal study of policy-making, examining interaction between policy elites, including policy network representatives, departmental civil servants and politicians. Children's services reform provides a critical test case given the diverse range of groups engaged in the policy-making process. This research collected evidence from 40 in-depth interviews with prominent policy actors, supplemented by analysis of over 300 official policy publications, Select Committee proceedings and media reports. The time frame applied (1997-2015) allowed for a comprehensive examination of different aspects of the children's services policy-making process under both the Labour and Coalition governments. On the basis of this evidence, this research develops five theoretical propositions which question the separation of the administrative and political domains of policy-making under both the DPM and the APM. These relate to: (1) the prominent role of ministers in Whitehall; (2) the limits of policy network access and influence; (3) the political dynamics driving public sector restructuring; (4) the role of party leaders and the importance of inter and intra-party political competition to the development of policy; and (5) the political dynamics of so-called evidence-based policy.

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Illustrations

Abbreviations

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
ADSS	Association of Directors of Social Services
APM	Asymmetric Power Model
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
BPT	British Political Tradition
CAFCASS	Children's and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CIAG	Children's Inter-Agency Group
CSD	Children's Services Department
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
CYP	Children and Young People's
CYPU	Children and Young People's Unit
DCS	Director of Children's Services
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DPM	Differentiated Polity Model
DSS	Department for Social Security
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ECM	Every Child Matters
ECPC	End Child Poverty Coalition
EIF	Early Intervention Foundation

FIPs	Family Intervention Pathfinders
LEA	Local Education Authority
LGA	Local Government Association
LMCS	Lead Member for Children's Services
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NPM	New Public Management
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
PAT	Policy Action Team
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PMDU	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RNIB	Royal National Institute for Blind People
SCG	Sub-Central Government
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SJPG	Social Justice Policy Group
SSD	Social Services Department
SWRB	Social Work Reform Board
SWTF	Social Work Taskforce

1) Introduction

Through a case study of children's services reform this thesis seeks to provide a fresh perspective on contemporary British public policy-making. It challenges the emphasis placed on the influence of non-political actors over policy under the two dominant models of policy-making. Rhodes' (1997) DPM emphasises the influence of autonomous non-governmental policy networks, whereas Marsh et al's (2001; 2003) APM stresses the dominance of an administrative elite based in Whitehall departments. Inspired by Moran's (2007) theory of the British regulatory state, this study investigates the role played by ministers and party leaders, and thereby questions the separation of the administrative and political domains of government by Rhodes and Marsh et al. This study draws on evidence collected through 40 in-depth interviews with elite policy-makers in this area. Interviewees included ministers, civil servants, children's charity leaders, local authority directors and independent policy experts. The participation of these individuals, along with the extended time-frame applied (1997-2015), allowed for a detailed examination of a number of aspects of children's services reform, and the role played by policy networks, departmental civil servants, and ministers and party leaders.

The conceptual framework for this case study is developed in chapter two. The discussion in this chapter begins with a critical review of the networks perspective and Rhodes' formulation of the DPM. This is followed by a review of Marsh et al's critique of the DPM, and the alternative APM they propose. The two models are based on alternative interpretations of the policy process under the Conservative Government (1979-1997). The reviews of both therefore reflect on the findings of more recent research covering policy-making under the Labour Government (1997-2010). The third section of the chapter builds on Moran's regulatory state perspective to develop a series of five research questions. These are subsequently used to interrogate the main points of contention between these three different perspectives on policy-making: (1) the role played by ministers in Whitehall; (2) the influence of policy networks; (3) the extent of ministerial interference in service delivery arrangements; (4) the role played by party leaders and the relevance of inter and intra-party competition; (5) the use made of expert evidence to shape policy. Chapter three summarises the methodological approach taken in this case study. This includes a discussion of the advantages and limitations of case study research and the use of elite interviews. It also

includes a discussion of the reasons for selecting children's services reform to respond to these research questions. A description of the data collection and analysis processes followed is also provided.

The empirical findings of this case study are presented in chapters four to seven. These chapters are arranged chronologically, with each covering a different critical period of children's service reform. Each chapter addresses each of the five research questions to a certain extent, although each has a particular focus. Chapter four considers the development of children's services during Labour's first term, focusing in particular on the role played by the Brown Treasury. This includes a discussion of controversial proposals for the restructuring of local authority children's services. Chapter five considers how these proposals were eventually legislated for. This requires a close examination of Labour's official response to Lord Laming's (2003) Victoria Climbié Inquiry and its influence over the ECM Green Paper (HM Government 2003a) and the subsequent Children Act 2004. Chapter six moves on to consider the post-legislative phase of ECM delivery, running from 2005 up until Labour's election defeat in 2010. This includes a focus on the intra-party tensions which affected ECM delivery whilst Blair remained in office, as well as the Brown Government's response to the challenge of inter-party competition following Cameron's development of a new Conservative Party approach to social policy. Chapter seven is the final empirical chapter, and focuses on the development of children's services policy under Coalition Government. This includes an examination of Coalition ministers' response to the ECM policy framework inherited from Labour.

Chapter eight provides the conclusion to this study. It includes a discussion of each of the five questions developed in chapter two in the light of the empirical evidence presented. On this basis, five new theoretical propositions relating to the political dimension of policy-making are provided. Moreover, it is suggested that these can provide the basis for future research looking at other areas of policy.

2) Competing Perspectives on British Policy-Making

This chapter considers three different theoretical perspectives on British policy-making. Rhodes' DPM and Marsh et al's alternative APM have been identified as the two dominant perspectives (Diamond 2014: chapter 4; Laffin 2013). Both models are informed by contrasting interpretations of public service reforms introduced by the Conservative Government (1979-1997). The central argument made in this chapter is that neither model pays adequate attention to the role of political actors (ministers and party leaders) in policy-making. The first section of the chapter examines Rhodes' DPM, and the argument that policy-making in this era became an increasingly pluralised process driven by non-governmental interest groups, or policy networks. This review examines the evolution of policy network theory and the subsequent development of Rhodes' DPM. It then assesses the the DPM against the findings of empirical research on policy-making under the Labour Government (1997-2010). The second section examines Marsh et al's critique of Rhodes' model and their construction of the alternative APM. Marsh et al reject Rhodes' pluralist perspective, arguing that policy-making under the Conservatives continued to be dominated by a governing elite based in Whitehall departments. This section similarly looks at the APM against research on the Labour Government. The third section of the chapter considers Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state, and the argument that British policy-making has become increasing politicised over recent decades. In the regulatory state it is ministers rather than policy networks or departmental interests that drive policy-making. Building on Moran's thesis this section also develops a framework for new research. This framework emphasises the main points of difference between the three perspectives reviewed here, providing a template for the examination of the boundaries between the political and the administrative domains of government.

NETWORK DRIVEN POLICY-MAKING

Policy Networks

The emphasis on the role of policy networks in recent research on policy-making, including Rhodes' DPM, has its origins in American and British literature on government-interest group relations. Pluralist theorists were critical of the predominant focus on formal policy-

making processes in institutional theories of politics (see Dahl 1958; 1961; MacKenzie 1958; Richardson and Jordan 1979). They drew our attention to a broader range of formal and informal processes and relationships both within and beyond the legislative arena. In relation to British politics, Richardson and Jordan's (1979) *Governing under Pressure* provided arguably the most influential statement of the pluralist perspective. Rejecting what they saw as an exclusive focus on the electorate, Parliament and Cabinet in traditional accounts, Richardson and Jordan directed us towards the role played by the "government-civil service-pressure group network" (1979: 41) in policy making. Their analysis relied upon an important conceptual distinction between the processes of policy formulation and policy implementation. They argued that non-governmental interest groups had particularly strong influence over implementation, an aspect of policy-making generally overlooked in traditional theories. Furthermore, Richardson and Jordan maintained that policy-making was largely dominated by tight-knit policy communities comprised of departmental officials and interest group representatives with a shared interest in specific areas of policy. In their view, the expansion of policy communities in the era of post-war welfare state construction served to limit ministerial and executive authority. Thus, for them it is "the practices of co-option and the consensual style, that perhaps better account for policy outcomes than do examinations of party stances, of manifestoes or of parliamentary influence" (74).

Marsh and Rhodes' (1992) *Policy Networks in British Government* builds on the insights of earlier theorists of government-group relations in British politics. Looking beyond the legislative arena, Marsh and Rhodes emphasise that "government is not an undifferentiated whole. It is a department or a section of a department which is involved in a policy network or community" (259). The distinction made here between policy networks and communities is important. Marsh and Rhodes are critical of earlier pluralist theories, which they argue provide only a very general and under-theorised perspective on government-group relations. They suggest that these accounts follow Heclo and Wildavsky (1974) in focusing only on the *micro* level of personal relationships. In their view, the close knit policy communities observed by Heclo and Wildavsky around the Treasury represent just one form of government-group interaction within a broader spectrum of *policy networks*. In order to understand the different forms of policy network, Marsh and Rhodes argue that the analysis of government-group interaction needs to be elevated to the 'meso level'. In other words, personal interactions between government officials and the representatives of interest groups need to be situated within an institutional context (Rhodes and Marsh 1992: 8-10).

Rhodes' Power Dependence Theory of Policy-Making

The theoretical foundation for Marsh and Rhodes' work on policy networks arose from Rhodes' earlier work on central-sub central government (SCG) relations (1981; 1988). SCG is defined broadly to include local government alongside a range of other local agencies responsible for the implementation of policy. It is here that Rhodes set out his power-dependence model of policy-making. The power dependence model conceptualises policy-making as a series of resource exchanges between policy actors representing the interests of central and SCG. Rhodes distinguishes between five types of resources: legal, financial, political, informational and organisational. He argues that traditional analyses of the formal policy-making process focus only on the first three types which are controlled by central government. This invites us to think of policy-making as a top-down process and SCG as highly dependent on central government for resources. However, Rhodes argues that "the preponderant share of informational and organisational resources" is held by SCG. This implies that each side has resources the other needs. Thus, central government and SCG are locked into a relationship of mutual dependency (Rhodes 1988: 142-43). Variation in the "structures of dependencies" (Rhodes 1988: 77) reveal differences in policy network form across different areas of policy. Marsh and Rhodes apply this theory to develop a typology of two basic types of policy network positioned at opposite ends of a spectrum. The defining characteristics of policy communities and issue networks are set out in the table below.

Table 1 – The Marsh and Rhodes Policy Network Typology

Dimension	Policy community	Issue network
Membership	Limited Dominated by professional and/or economic interests	Large Wide range of interests
Integration	Highly integrated - shared values and stable membership	Fluid – conflict ever present
Resources	All members possess resources to exchange and control their own organisations	Only some members have resources. Members cannot always control their own organisations
Power	Balanced – interaction is a positive sum game.	Unequal – interaction is a zero-sum game

Adapted from Marsh and Rhodes (1992: 251).

Policy Networks and Policy Change

Marsh and Rhodes' policy networks typology has inspired a wide range of empirical studies of policy-making in discrete areas of policy, including the case studies presented in their edited book itself (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). Börzel (1998: 258, emphasis in original) comments that; "Policy networks are generally regarded as an *analytical tool* for examining institutionalized exchange relations between the state and organizations of civil society, allowing a more 'fine grain' analysis by taking into account sectoral and sub-sectoral differences, the role played by private and public actors, and formal as well as informal relationships between them." However, Marsh and Rhodes' emphasis on policy networks was criticised for its inability to explain change to both policy outcomes and the policy-making process (Dowding 1995; Richardson 2000). Reflecting on *Governing under Pressure* over two decades later, Richardson (2000) is perplexed by its continued influence admitting that "it had no great pretensions to being a new *theory* of British politics" (1006, emphasis in original). Richardson and Jordan's (1979) account of British policy-making described a period of post-war welfare state construction, in which the main concerns of both Labour and Conservative governments related to the implementation of relatively uncontested policy priorities. Their account, and the policy networks perspective developed by Marsh and Rhodes, are only able to explain incremental change in the context of a stable ideological environment.

However, Marsh and Rhodes (1992: 257-61) do accept the limitations of policy network research. In the case studies they present, explanations of policy change rely upon four exogenous factors. Firstly, economic or market factors are deemed to have affected the way networks have developed. For example, the creation of the youth unemployment network during the 1980s. The second category identified was ideological change - specifically the election of the Conservative Government in 1979 inspired by the New Right. Under Thatcher's leadership this government rolled out a range of public service reforms under the guise of economy, efficiency and effectiveness which led to the restructuring of established policy communities and had considerable impact on departmental policy agendas. The third category identified was changes in information or knowledge. Marsh and Rhodes cite the example of evidence demonstrating the link between smoking and ill health. Fourthly, institutional change, and specifically the development of European political institutions, drove change in industrial and commercially orientated networks. In the final pages of *Policy Networks and British Government,* Marsh and Rhodes (1992) suggest that *meso* level policy

network theory needs to be integrated into a *macro* level framework in order to recognise the importance of the social, economic and political context of policy-making. However, the search for a more complete theoretical model of British policy-making saw Rhodes and Marsh follow separate paths. Significantly Rhodes, through his work on the DPM, argued that policy networks have become the key drivers of the policy. The remainder of this section outlines the key theoretical components of the DPM and reviews the empirical research it has inspired.

The Differentiated Polity Model

The Hollowing Out of the State

Rhodes' thesis of the hollowing out of the state is pivotal to the DPM. The concept refers to a process under which the capacity of central government to direct policy-making has been greatly diminished. Firstly, Rhodes claims that the state has been hollowed out *externally* through globalisation and the development of European political institutions. Secondly, Rhodes argues that the state has been hollowed out *internally* as an unintended consequence of Conservative public service reforms. In particular Rhodes points towards the market based reforms pursued after 1988 (Rhodes 1997: 100). It is argued that the opening up of public services to a wider range of organisations, including those in the private and voluntary sectors, created institutional fragmentation and increased central government dependency on local agencies.

Rhodes' conceptualisation of policy-making within a differentiated polity provides a restatement of pluralist theory. Under the DPM interest groups, or what Rhodes calls "self-steering inter-organisational policy networks" (Rhodes 1997: 5), are deemed to be the key drivers of public policy. Moving on from his earlier work with Marsh, Rhodes' hollowing out thesis enables him to downplay the socio-economic and political constraints surrounding policy networks. Thus, power-dependence becomes the "explanatory motor" under the DPM (Rhodes 1997: 9).

The Fragmentation of Public Services under the Conservatives (1979-1997)

As noted above, Rhodes' (1997: chapter 5) account of the internal hollowing out of central government is based on his assessment of the Conservative Government's (1979-1997) public service reforms. In contrast to the post-war era of relative ideological consensus, this period of British politics was one of ideological, social and economic upheaval. The Conservative's primary rationale for reform was to control public spending. This required the

reassertion of political authority over policy communities including the departments which protected them. Towards this end the Conservatives embarked upon a programme of separate reform initiatives, which *post hoc* were rationalised as the 'New Public Management' (NPM) (Hood 1991; Ferlie et al 1996). Applying the conventional NPM narrative Rhodes argues that that the autonomy of departmental policy communities was curtailed through the extension of regulation and audit, the introduction of private sector management techniques, the 'agencification' of civil service functions, market testing, and an increased focus on the needs of public service 'consumers'.

Rhodes recognises that such reforms were not unique to Britain. However, he argues that the pace and intensity of reform was. He attributes this to the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party in the British political system, and the determination of Thatcher to use this to reassert authority over policy communities (1997: 88). Moreover, Rhodes suggests that these reforms had a dramatic impact on the policy-making process. However, he argues that they did not deliver the intended effect of centralising policy-making. Rather the assault on departmental policy communities is deemed to have resulted in the further fragmentation of the policy-making process and the increased autonomy of policy networks. Thus, political factors are deemed to have contributed to the emergence of the differentiated polity. Yet the consequent fragmentation of public services is deemed to have had the unintended effect of undermining central government control over policy-making. This interpretation of the Conservative era provides a key point of disagreement across the three perspectives on British policy-making considered in this chapter.

The Limits of Executive Control

The possibility that future governments might be able to re-establish central control over policy-making is compounded by Rhodes' theory of core executive relations (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990; Elgie 2011; Rhodes 1995; 1997; 2007). This theory challenges conventional accounts of central government that assume electoral success gives power to the prime minister and party leader. Under the traditional 'positional' view, power is seen to reside in the office of the prime minister, giving him or her the capacity to direct Cabinet. Rhodes 'relational' view rejects this, emphasising the dependence of the prime minister on policy-making resources beyond the control of No 10. Moreover, Rhodes claims that the capacity of the prime minister to direct policy has been eroded over recent decades as policy networks have gained greater autonomy. Thus, "the tradition of strong executive leadership founders on the bargaining games within and between networks" (Rhodes 1997; 22).

Having said this, it is important to acknowledge that Rhodes does not ignore the role played by party leaders in policy-making. Indeed, his account of reform under the Conservatives highlights the impact of political leadership and ideology on established policy communities. However, the important point is that his hollowed out thesis, and the emphasis placed on the autonomy of policy networks, implies that centrally directed policy change occurs only under exceptional circumstances. In other words, the 'every day' process of policy-making is largely driven by policy networks operating independently of central government. Moreover, this is central to Rhodes' network governance narrative.

Network Governance

Network governance provides a shorthand label for the new process of policy-making within the differentiated polity. As a consequence of the hollowing out of central government, and its internal fragmentation, it is argued that policy networks now drive the policy process. Rhodes (1997: 12) states that "central departments are no longer either necessarily or invariably the fulcrum, or the focal organization, of a network". Thus *network governance* is replacing *government*. Reflecting on the continuing fragmentation of public services, as central government tries to reassert control through the extension of market governance mechanisms, Rhodes goes as far as forecasting a future scenario of "governing without Government" (Rhodes 1997: 59).

Rhodes (1997: chapter 3) also prescribes network governance as a governing strategy for central government. Drawing on American and Dutch public management research, Rhodes considers networks to be an alternative and in some instances superior mode of central governance to both hierarchy and markets. Using, Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) famous phrase, Rhodes suggests that central government government should 'steer' rather than 'row'. In relation to welfare services, it is suggested that networks can foster trust and co-operation across multiple agencies which might otherwise have been pitched against each other under market competition, or faced with counterproductive central commands under hierarchical governance. This leads us into a discussion of Rhodes' application of the DPM to the Labour Government.

Labour and Policy Networks

In his subsequent work with Mark Bevir, Rhodes presents empirical evidence to support the claim that governance through networks has replaced government through hierarchy. Bevir and Rhodes (2003a; 2003b) argue that the Labour leadership appreciated the difficulties they

faced in seeking to govern in a highly fragmented public realm. They argue that whilst the Labour leadership accepted New Right economic and social policy priorities, it rejected the Conservatives' approach to public sector governance. But Bevir and Rhodes lean heavily on Blair's *Third Way* discourse and just one official statement of Labour's governing strategy – the Cabinet Office Report *Modernising Government* (1999), to support this claim. They confidently assert that Labour rejected the Conservatives' commitment to market governance, as well as 'old' Labour's preference for command bureaucracy. In their view:

> New Labour's notion of governance seeks to transform the state into an enabling partner by promoting the idea of networks of institutions and individuals acting in partnership and held together by relations of trust (Bevir and Rhodes 2003b: 55).

They do not argue that hierarchy and markets were abandoned altogether. Rather it is claimed that Labour was seeking to establish a mix of governance mechanisms appropriate to the particular services being provided (Bevir and Rhodes 2003a: 129). In Bevir and Rhodes' view, networks were the preferred mode of governance for the delivery of complex services involving multiple agencies, where co-operative relationships are deemed more productive than competition or hierarchy. They point us towards new inter-departmental policy-making institutions created centrally, and new local multi-agency service delivery partnerships, as evidence.

In a later assessment, Bevir and Rhodes (2006: chapter 6) are more critical of Labour's governance strategy. In their view, Labour leaders did not translate their apparent appreciation of interdependence in policy-making and implementation into an appropriate governing strategy. They argue that Blair's attempt to establish central control over the new policy-making and service delivery institutions, particularly from the second term onwards, was misguided. They conclude that, "centralization, pluralization and personalization represent not a concentration of power, but an endless search for effective levers of control by a core executive less powerful than many commentators and insiders claim" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006: 108). Putting it another way, Bevir and Rhodes (2006: 103-108) argue that Labour remained stuck behind the smokescreen of the 'Westminster model', never fully able to appreciate the implications of governance. However, Bevir and Rhodes' analysis is limited by its attempt to ascribe a single overarching governance strategy to Labour. They are not alert to possible tensions and contradictions in Labour's approach to public service governance overtime and across discrete policy areas. Nevertheless, governance theory,

including Rhodes' DPM, has inspired numerous studies of the policy implementation process under Labour (Laffin 2009: 21). The findings of these studies must now be considered.

Implementation Studies

In general, studies of policy implementation under Labour undermine Rhodes' hollowed out thesis, highlighting the continued dominance of central government and the prevalence of hierarchical governance arrangements. With regard to central-local government relations under Labour, Wilson (2003) warns us against "an excessive focus on the numbers of agencies comprising the 'local governance' universe" (335). In his view, the apparent openness of the Labour Government to the diverse range of voices at the local level, including and beyond local government, did not signal increased dependence by government on local networks. In Wilson's view, "multi-level dialogue" rather than "multi-level governance" characterised a relationship in which the centre continued to dominate policy-making in the context of an elite power structure. Promises made by DCLG to foster greater autonomy for 'high performing' local authorities through Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) were stymied by the major Whitehall service departments which would not relinquish control over their policy domain (328).

Research on education policy under Labour (Bache 2003; Goodwin and Grix 2011) supports Wilson's (2003) conclusion that central government continued to dominate policy-making. Bache (2003) examined education reform from the perspective of policy actors in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Here the apparent proliferation of new policy actors did not signal a shift towards network governance. The opening up of schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to new providers in the private and third sectors was part of a deliberate strategy of 'governing through governance'. New models of education delivery gave central government greater capacity to pursue its policy objectives. Furthermore, these new service delivery models not only provided new mechanisms for governing through governance, they also had the effect of "disciplining the old sites of power to central control" (Goodwin and Grix 2011: 542). For example, in Bache's (2003) case study of the role of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), the threat of outsourcing, as had occurred in Leeds, strengthened the Government's hierarchical control over LEAs in general.

Davies (2002) also challenges Rhodes' governance thesis through research on local urban regeneration partnerships in four English boroughs. These partnerships, initially formed under the Conservatives but continued under Labour, initially appear to fit the mould of

network governance. Based in areas of economic and social deprivation, urban regeneration partnerships brought together local business elites alongside public sector agencies, including local government, in an attempt to spur local economic development. Local partnerships were given significant financial resources to invest locally. However, partnerships operated within a centrally defined framework of policy priorities and resource allocation processes. Thus, Davies concludes that these partnerships must not be confused with the self-organizing, trust based, collaborative networks Rhodes describes (316). Rather, he argues that;

> Partnerships may be as much about bringing other groups into co-operation with the state as they are about bringing local authorities into partnership with other 'stakeholders' and creating networks. In a sense, the process can be seen as an attempt to incorporate civil society into state-driven governing mechanisms, blurring the edges between state and non-state institutions (Davies 2002: 315).

Marsh et al's APM provides a more state centric perspective on policy-making that is more consistent with this claim, and the findings of the other research on policy implementation reviewed here. This alternative model must now be reviewed.

WHITEHALL DRIVEN POLICY-MAKING

The Asymmetric Power Model (APM)

Subsequent to his work with Rhodes, Marsh has downplayed the importance of policy networks. Marsh et al's alternative APM is based on a critique of Rhodes' pluralistic DPM. The core argument made is that the DPM fails to take adequate account of the socio-economic context of policy-making in Britain, and therefore exaggerates the degree to which power has become increasingly diffused over recent decades. Thus, the APM emphasises the continued hold over policy-making of an administrative elite based in Whitehall. The founding text for the APM is Marsh et al's (2001) *Changing Patterns of Governance in the UK*. Based on research undertaken as part of the ESRC Whitehall Programme directed by Rhodes, this study draws upon four cases studies of government departments between 1974 and 1997. The analysis focuses necessarily on the Conservative Government of 1979-1997, with the period before that used primarily as an historical and comparative reference. This section provides an overview of the APM, highlighting its theoretical departures and similarities with Rhodes' DPM. It also assesses the validity of the APM in the light of the small handful of empirical studies of central government policy-making under Labour.

Asymmetric Power Relations

Following Rhodes, Marsh et al accept that it may now be appropriate to talk of governance, or multi-level governance, rather than government, given the changes to the British policy-making process over recent decades (Marsh et al 2003: 315). However, from their perspective Rhodes' model of governance greatly exaggerates the autonomy of networks. In their view, the core executive of central government remains the dominant partner within policy networks (Marsh et al 2001 chapter 8; see also Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 8). Marsh et al did observe change in the membership and nature of policy networks over time as policy priorities shifted, but argue that this did not constitute a 'hollowing out' of the state. On the basis of their research they conclude that; "Seldom, if ever, is it non-state groups that dictate the nature of policy networks" (Marsh et al 2001: 208). Thus, it is argued that hierarchy, not networks, constitutes the main mode of governance within the policy-making process (Marsh 2008).

The APM retains Rhodes' power-dependence theory of policy-making. However, it rejects Rhodes' pluralist assumption that resources, and thus power, are diffused (Marsh et al 2001: 8-11; 2003: 308-310). Rather Marsh et al argue that the distribution of resources reflects "a broader social, political and economic system that is characterised by structured inequality" (Marsh et al 2001: 9). In other words, power is asymmetrically distributed. Consequently, "individuals drawn from privileged backgrounds dominate British policy-making" (Marsh et al 2003: 309). Groups drawn from outside the narrow elite can influence policy under the APM, however it is argued that they face more severe constraints than Rhodes appreciates. Marsh et al argue that British politics "is not an even playing field… enduring slopes and gullies favour some interests over others" (Marsh et al 2003: 310). They also question the extent to which core executive power has been externally hollowed-out at the global and European levels. In their view extreme interpretations of globalisation exaggerate its impact (and novelty) whilst also overlooking the importance of nation-state's responses (Marsh et al 2001: chapter 9; 2003: 325-332). Furthermore, they also suggest that European political reform may have provided new mechanisms for nation states to direct policy, rather than a simple devolution of power to Brussels. Thus, it is argued that "it is more appropriate to conceive of the state as having been reconstituted, rather than hollowed-out" (Marsh et al 2003: 332). In summary, Marsh et al argue that the socio-economic and political context of British politics protects a governing elite in Whitehall and limits the autonomy of policy networks.

Re-interpreting Public Service Reform under the Conservatives (1979-1997)

Central to Marsh et al's critique of Rhodes' perspective is an alternative assessment of public service reform under the Conservatives. Marsh et al (Marsh et al 2001: chapter 3; Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 5) accept that 18 years of Conservative rule led to important changes in the patterns of policy-making associated with the four departments they studied. However, in their view Conservative reforms did not bring about the dramatic and irreversible transformation Rhodes depicts. Marsh et al argue that there was no overarching and coherent NPM strategy applied across all areas of policy as Rhodes implies. Across their four case studies they describe a more ad hoc reform process in which the political challenge to established departmental priorities and processes was more sporadic. Marsh (2008) sees greater continuity within the policy-making process than Rhodes does. Drawing on neo-institutional theory, he emphasises the *path dependency* (Marsh 2008: 252-4) of the policy process. Thus, it is argued that the dominance of departmental interests over policy-making was not dramatically altered. Or, in other words, there was no internal hollowing out of central government.

Departments and the Minister-Civil Service Relationship

Under the APM it is Whitehall departments, not policy networks, that drive the policy-making process. As noted above, Marsh et al retain Rhodes' power-dependence theory of policy-making. However, they argue that resources are concentrated in departments and are not diffused widely beyond Whitehall as Rhodes suggests. In the opening page of their study they declare that:

> Departments are a concentration of political and bureaucratic resources. They are the source of most policy and they hold overall responsibility for delivering policies. As such, the activities of the core executive occur within the departmental framework. The majority of ministers operate within, and draw most of their resources from, departments. Officials are based in, and loyal to, departments. In fact, most of the key concerns of those analysing British government… are only meaningful in the context of departments (Marsh et al 2001: 1).

Significantly, and in keeping with Rhodes' theory of core executive relations, this argument assumes that the prime minister has limited capacity to redirect policy. However, under the APM it is dependence on departments rather than policy networks that constrains the prime minister (Marsh et al 2001: chapter 5; 2003: 320-323; Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 9).

Under the APM the most important relationship within the policy-making process is the one between ministers and senior civil servants (Marsh et al 2001: chapter 6-7; Richards and

Smith 2002: chapter 9). Rejecting the image of perpetual conflict portrayed in the television satire *Yes Minister,* it is argued that "generally, the relationship between ministers and civil servants is harmonious" (Richards and Smith 2004: 778). Normal daily life within departments sees each side working with the other to deliver mutually beneficial goals. This image of "club government" (Richards and Smith 2002: 201) is remarkably similar to that described by Richardson and Jordan (1979) in the pre-crisis era. To explain this Marsh et al highlight the existence of established departmental cultures. In their view ministers invariably learn to accept rather than challenge departmental cultures. Thus, more often than not, ministers seek to defend established departmental priorities and resources, promoting policy stability rather than change.

Having said this, Marsh et al recognise that ideologically-orientated ministers sometimes do drive through policy change. The example of Michael Howard at the Home Office is cited as an example (Marsh et al 2001: chapter 4; Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 9; 2004). However, this example of politically directed reform is portrayed as an exception. Significantly, Marsh et al depict Howard as the principal agent of policy reform in the Home Office. The possibility of reform being directed, or at least influenced by, party leaders is overlooked. Marsh et al are sceptical even with regard to Thatcher's influence over departmental policy, arguing that she "was often so pre-occupied with a limited set of issues elsewhere that the extent and depth of her reach was limited" (2001: 119). Thus, the APM emphasises the minister-civil service relationship, and downplays the relationship between ministers and party leaders.

The British Political Tradition

The concept of a British political tradition (BPT) has been widely discussed by British politics scholars in recent years (Diamond 2014; Evans 1995; Hall 2011; Marsh 2008; 2008b; 2011; Marsh and Hall 2007; Marsh et al 2001; 2003; Tant 1993). It conceptualises a shared set of ideas that unite an administrative elite across Whitehall. The BPT forms a key component of the APM view of policy-making and is defined thus:

> The BPT emphasizes the idea that a responsible government is one which is willing and able to take strong, decisive, necessary action, even if that action is opposed by a majority of the population. This view rests on the idea that 'government knows best'; it advocates a leadership, rather than a participatory, view of democracy (Marsh et al 2003: 312).

Under the APM ministers and civil servants draw upon the BPT to defend departmental autonomy and promote policy stability. From this perspective, policy change occurs when

ministers draw upon ideas that challenge the BPT, as Howard did in the Home Office (Richards and Smith 2004). Moreover, within the constraints of the BPT it is argued that, "while change is possible, it is very difficult to achieve" (Marsh et al 2003: 313).

Labour and Whitehall

The view that Whitehall drives policy-making has been defended by David Richards, one of the APM co-authors, in his work on Labour and the civil service (Kavanagh and Richards 2001; Richards 2008; Richards et al 2008; Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 10; 2004). Following Bevir and Rhodes (2003a; 2003b), Richards' interpretation of Labour's governance strategy draws heavily upon Blair's *Third Way* discourse and the *Modernising Government* (Cabinet Office 1999) report. But, challenging Bevir and Rhodes' argument that Labour pursued a strategy of governance through networks, Richards emphasises No10's efforts to 'join-up' departmental policy-making. This drive saw existing units at the centre such as the Cabinet Office strengthened. Others, for example the SEU, were created to lead the development of new policy areas. The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU), set up at the beginning of the second term, was designed to give No10 tighter control over policy implementation. Furthermore, Blair also set up an extensive range of policy task forces in priority areas, bringing together a wide range of interests from across government departments and outside.

Significantly, however, Richards suggests that Labour's reforms did not mark a radical departure with established policy-making traditions in Whitehall. Thus, in his view "Labour's reforms have reinforced the characteristics associated with the APM" (Richards 2008: 139). Explaining this, Richards argues that, despite all the rhetoric of radical reform and modernisation, Labour in fact adopted a fairly benign view of Whitehall (Richards et al 2008: 488). In his view, Labour, in keeping with past Labour administrations, remained committed to working within an established constitutional framework that preserved the position of the governing elite. Richards (2008) argues that "the Westminster model remains the most important, indeed overarching, tradition which has shaped Labour's approach to Whitehall" (7). However, Richards' analysis, as with Bevir and Rhodes (2003a; 2003b; 2006) appears to be directed at defending a particular model of British policy-making and lacks strong empirical support. Despite writing in the third term of Labour, Richards' account remains rooted in an analysis of Blair's early push to centralise policy-making in No10 (52-53). Moreover, it fails to draw upon a sufficiently broad and representative range of evidence covering different policy areas over the thirteen years of Labour rule.

Marsh (2008) on the other hand analyses two specific areas of Labour policy in his defence of the APM – electoral reform and freedom of information. But, these are clearly not substantive areas of policy. More recently, Diamond (2014) has sought to address the lack of empirical evidence available on interaction between central units and departments (112). His research lends support to Richards' interpretation and the APM more generally. Emphasising the path dependency of policy-making in the Labour era he argues that; "the exercise of power within the core executive takes place in a structured context infused by the BPT" (18). However, his case studies of Academy Schools (2000-7), Family Nurse Partnerships (2005-10) and the National Economic Council (2008-10) do not provide a good representation of the main policy priorities of Blair and Brown, nor cover a sufficient time-frame under which policy change can be observed. As noted in chapter 3, Sabatier (1991: 14) suggests that case studies need to examine a minimum of ten years of policy-making in a particular area. This is deemed necessary in order to provide a sufficient time frame to judge the impact of policy reform, but also because policy change can sometimes occur gradually. Of Diamond's case studies, only Academy Schools covers a substantive area of policy over an extended time frame. However, prior to the White Paper *Better Standards, Better Schools for All* (HM Government 2005a), even this was just one relatively small component of a much broader schools reform agenda.

The Politics of Education and Housing Policy

A small handful of studies covering education and housing policy under Labour offer more revealing insights with regard to Labour's approach to governing Whitehall. Ball's research (Ball 2008; Ball and Exley 2010) attempts to map the new policy networks involved in the formulation of education policy under Labour. He identifies the leading individuals and organisations which constitute the 'nodal points' of these networks. These networks are associated with innovations in education policy such as the Academies and Specialist Schools programmes. He also identifies the 'interlockers' who provide a bridge between networks and central government policy-makers in order to "make things happen" (Ball and Exley 2010: 152). However, by his own admission, this research remains largely descriptive; "We cannot at this stage develop an explanatory account of the evolutions of these networks" (Ball and Exley, 2010 152). Exley's (2012) case study of policy-making for the Specialist Schools programme is however more revealing. In her account, the evolution of these networks is connected to the centralisation of education policy-making in No10. Membership of the new networks was based on "like-mindedness" (230) with Blair and his close advisers. These new

networks provided an alternative source of advice and support, enabling No10 to side-step departmental interests and their client policy networks. This enabled Blair, via Andrew Adonis, to impose the Specialist Schools programme on the sceptical Secretary of State Charles Clarke (235). Thus, Exley's research reveals the political impetus behind this particular policy reform, challenging the view that the party leadership remains constrained by departmental power.

Laffin's (2013) study highlights the importance of party political considerations to Labour ministers in charge of housing policy. As in education, the housing policy arena is populated by a diverse range of policy actors which at the surface level gives the impression of network governance. However, the housing policy network did not influence the direction of government policy. The policy of transferring council housing to social landlords led to the fragmentation of established service delivery structures. As in education, this fragmentation provided the Labour Government with an alternative service delivery mechanism, or a means of "governing through governance" (Bache 2003), enabling it to side-step the resistance of those who sought to defend the rights of council housing tenants. Laffin (2013) concludes that;

> Social tenancy reform can only be understood in terms of how the Labour parliamentary leadership learnt the lessons of past housing policy, or past government failures, and their electoral consequences during the 1980s and 1990s; as well as the diminishing electoral significance of social tenants (Laffin 2013: 207).

Laffin and Exley's findings contradict the departmental view of policy-making promoted by the APM. Both studies highlight the political impetus driving policy change. Moreover, they both highlight the importance of the electoral context of policy-making.

RE-CONCEPTUALISING POLICY-MAKING: TOWARDS A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the light of research examining policy-making under the Labour Government, the two dominant models of British policy-making need to be re-evaluated. The DPM is considered to provide the new orthodox perspective on policy-making (Marsh 2011), yet there is now a sizeable body of evidence to undermine the claim that government has been hollowed out, and that policy networks drive policy-making. This evidence suggests that Marsh et al are right to redirect us towards central government as the principal policy-making arena.

However, to date there has been limited research which examines key relationships within government and between government and non-governmental groups. This is necessary to interrogate the assumption underlying the APM that departments normally drive policy-making and that politically driven change occurs only exceptionally. Research on education and housing policy formulation under Labour suggests that policy-making may be more politicised than Marsh et al recognise. However, more evidence from other areas of policy is needed to interrogate this hypothesis. As a first step towards gathering such evidence, it is necessary to specify what might define a politicised policy-making process, and how this differs from the image of policy-making depicted by the DPM and the APM. Moran's (2007) thesis of the British regulatory state provides a useful starting point.

The British Regulatory State

Moran agrees with Rhodes that a dramatic transformation in Britain's governing arrangements has taken place since the onset of the fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Contrary to the picture painted by Marsh et al, his analysis suggests that many of the Whitehall policy communities that controlled policy-making in the post-war era have been broken up. However, he fundamentally rejects the view that policy-making has become a more pluralised process. In Moran's view the defining trend of recent decades in Britain has not been the diffusion of power and the rise of non-governmental policy networks, but quite the opposite – the centralisation and politicisation of policy-making. He argues that; "the new regulatory state, so often identified with the rise of neutral, non-majoritarian decision making, has actually exposed hitherto non-political domains to the power of elected politicians" (2007: 125).

Moran's argument rests on the claim that the pre-crisis era did not mark the high point of command and control, as Rhodes implies, but rather the high point of self-regulation in public services. He explains that politicians in this era were pre-occupied with 'high politics'. Under the system of self-regulation decisions with regard to policy implementation or service delivery were considered to be 'low politics', and were generally devolved to civil servants and public service professionals. However, Moran claims that the onset of the fiscal crisis coincided with a collapse of confidence in the system of self-regulation in public services. Furthermore, the political response to this has been to dismantle the system of self-regulation and build a more centralised regulatory framework in order to try and direct service delivery. Thus, a defining characteristic of Moran's British regulatory state is the politicisation of all aspects of policy-making ranging from decisions regarding policy priorities down to

arrangements for service delivery at the local level. Refuting the governance narrative, Moran argues that; "worlds hitherto dominated by an alliance of professionals and mandarins" have been replaced by "micro-management from the centre, often driven by the short-term horizons of politicians enmeshed in the partisan struggle" (157). In other words, party politics now has a more direct bearing on the every-day process of policy-making in the regulatory state.

High Modernism

The development of new regulatory regimes to govern the delivery of public services is frequently interpreted as evidence of a shift away from traditional forms of hierarchical governance. In Rhodes' analysis experimentation with new organisational forms, such as 'arms length' government agencies and service delivery partnerships, is indicative of a shift towards a post-modern network mode of governance. In his view traditional command-and-control systems are increasingly being replaced by new arrangements designed to foster greater trust and co-operation between central government and local agencies. Marsh (2008) rejects this arguing that hierarchy remains the dominant mode of governance. However, viewed through the lens of Moran's thesis, this debate appears overly simplistic. Moran recognises the shifts in governing arrangements that Rhodes' describes. But significantly, he rejects the view that this confirms a preference for new post-modern governing arrangements. For Moran experimentation with new combinations of hierarchical, network and market governance mechanisms stems from a breakdown in trust in the old world of self-regulation. Thus, *high modernism* is a hallmark of the new regulatory state. The regulatory state is characterised by "the drive to standardize, to quantify, and thus to transform the tacit knowledge of insiders into public knowledge available to all" (7). Moreover, this supports the politicisation of all aspects of policy-making, facilitating "the micro-management of policy, involving ministerial attention to the minutiae of policy delivery" (181).

Hyper-Innovation

Challenging the concept of a British political tradition, which is critical to the APM, Moran's thesis suggests that the emergence of the regulatory state marked a dramatic departure from decades of stability in British governing arrangements. In his view, one of the most notable aspects of the regulatory state is a propensity for continuous reform, what he calls *hyper-innovation*. Moran argues that a major symptom of hyper-innovation is the "ubiquity of institutional reorganisation" (131). He points towards the growth and continuous

restructuring of education inspectorates as an example of this. Moran argues that in this policy area the dominance of a small regulatory community in Whitehall has been challenged by "a large, overlapping, and often competing range of regulatory bodies" (133). In health he describes the establishment of internal markets as an attempt "to introduce neo-liberal disciplines into a command system" (140).

For Moran, "the age of hyper-innovation is also the age of hyper-politicisation: the invasion of hitherto 'non-partisan' policy domains by the actors, language, and strategies of adversarial party politics" (21). Underlining this argument, Moran states:

> Hyper-innovation is the product of democratic politics dominated by adversarial competition, where politicians are forced to intervene to shape policy around the short term imperatives of the adversarial battle, and the managements of their own careers. The effect has been to produce a shift to micro-management of projects by senior ministers (Moran 2007: 190).

Ironically, this invasion of the policy communities once dominated by government officials and professionals "frustrates the ambition central to the regulatory state: to subject policy choice to systematic rational analysis" (176). Thus, the concept of hyper-innovation challenges Rhodes' power-dependence theory of policy-making, which underpins both the DPM and the APM. Moreover, it leads us to question the assumption that political actors are constrained by a dependence upon policy-making resources controlled by departmental officials and/or policy networks. Moran cites the example of the Poll Tax to support his argument that political actors often ignore the advice of experts (176). In his view, the politicisation of domains previously controlled by expert officials and professionals had led to increased policy fiasco (Moran 2007: chapter 7).

Research Questions

Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state provides an alternative theoretical perspective on recent trends in British politics. Significantly, his claim that policy-making in recent decades has become hyper-politicised (2007: 21) clearly contradicts Rhodes' emphasis on network governance, but also Marsh et al's view that an administrative elite continues to dominate. However, more empirical research is needed to test this perspective. This research must consider the question: *To what extent is British policy-making driven by policy networks, Whitehall departments or political actors?* However, this general question needs to be unpicked in order to delineate the boundaries for research and ensure that it address the key conceptual differenced between the DPM, the APM and Moran's British regulatory state.

Towards this end, the remainder of this section considers five aspects of policy-making that need to be addressed.

(1) Ministers and Departments

Both Marsh et al and Moran position ministers as key players in the policy-making process. Moreover, both reject Rhodes' claim that policy-making has become increasingly pluralised over recent decades. However, the APM and the regulatory state offer-up markedly different perspectives on ministerial behaviour. Under the APM the minister-civil servant relationship is seen to be the most important determinant of policy. Moreover, this is seen to promote stability, both in terms of overarching priorities and the process of policy-making. Under the APM both ministers and civil servants appeal to a BPT to defend shared interests and resist reform. In contrast, in Moran's regulatory state ministers are the source of perpetual reform. Following the collapse in confidence in the old world of club government, Moran claims that ministers are more exposed to the pressure of party political competition and must continual demonstrate their capacity to deliver policy change. Thus, partnership between ministers and civil servants has been replaced by ministerial micro-management. To address this point of contention, it is therefore necessary to ask: *To what extent do ministers seek to redirect policy-making in Whitehall?*

(2) Policy Networks

Research must also address the role of policy networks in policy-making, as this is central to Rhodes' DPM. In Rhodes' view an apparent proliferation of "self-steering inter-organisational policy networks" (1997: 5) engaged in policy-making is a consequence of central government hollowing out, and thus the pluralisation of policy-making. Marsh et al suggest that Rhodes exaggerates this trend and underestimates the extent to which Whitehall continues to dominate policy networks. On the other hand, Moran acknowledges the transformation in governance arrangements highlighted by Rhodes. From his perspective this reflects the break-up of the Whitehall policy communities once dominated by civil servants and public service professionals. But critically, Moran argues that this has not increased the influence of interest groups over policy as Rhodes claims. Rather, in his view "it has actually exposed hitherto non-political domains to the power of elected politicians (2007: 125). To interrogate these different accounts, we must ask: *To what extent is policy shaped by policy networks independent of central government?*

(3) Service Delivery Arrangements

Rhodes' DPM draws our attention to the process of policy implementation. In his view, this highlights the dependence of central government policy-makers on local agencies. Furthermore, Rhodes argues that experiments with new arrangements for service delivery confirm that *governance* through networks has replaced *government* through hierarchy. However, research on policy implementation under the Labour Government clearly points towards the continued dominance of the state at the local level. Under Labour experiments with new arrangements for service delivery are shown to have been directed towards the delivery of central government priorities, and enforcing the compliance of local agencies. This is consistent with Marsh et al's claim that policy-making continues to be dominated by a governing elite based in Whitehall. However, implementation research does not shed any light on relations within the state. In other words, it cannot specify which groups are directing policy within central government. Under the APM it assumed that policy is directed by an administrative elite made up of ministers and civil servants based in separate Whitehall departments. In contrast, Moran's thesis claims that all aspects of policy-making, including the detail of policy delivery at the local level, are subject to the micro-management of ministers. Moreover, ministers in Moran's regulatory state are compelled to continuously re-organise service delivery arrangements to demonstrate impact. It is therefore necessary to ask: *To what extent do ministers shape service delivery arrangements?*

(4) Party Leaders and Inter and Intra-Party Political Competition

Both the DPM and the APM downplay the potential role played by party leaders in policy-making. For Rhodes dependence on policy networks limits the capacity of the core executive to direct policy. Marsh et al, on the other hand, argue that departmental dominance within the core executive constraints the party leadership and thus limits the possibilities for radical policy change. Significantly, these assumptions imply that policy-making is sheltered from the every-day pressure of party politics, including interference from party leaders. In contrast, Moran claims that the break-up of the old world of public sector self-regulation has exposed policy-making to the whims of ministers "enmeshed in the partisan struggle" (2007: 157). Within the regulatory state, ministers must pay closer attention to dynamics of electoral competition in order maintain the support of the Prime Minister and keep their job. In other words, *inter-party competition* is viewed as an important factor shaping policy-making. However, the well documented competitive rivalries between Blair and Brown also alert us to the potential importance of *intra-party competition*. Rose (1974: chapter 12) argues that all

unified electoral parties are made up of competing 'policy parties'. The implication is that policy-makers must take account of not only the pressure of electoral competition, but also internal party rivalries. Therefore, research needs to consider the question: *To what extent is policy-making informed by the priorities of party leaders and the dynamics of inter and intra-party political competition?*

(5) Evidence-based Policy

It is now common to hear ministers and party leaders distance themselves from party political ideology, and declare a commitment to 'evidence-based' policy, or simply doing 'what works'. This claim is supported by numerous examples of dialogue between central government policy-makers and non-partisan experts. This has extended to the commissioning of well resourced and wide-ranging independent reviews of policy led by such experts. Often these reviews are commissioned in aftermath of a public scandal which has challenged the effectiveness of existing policy. Interestingly, this trend is consistent with the punctuated equilibrium theory of policy change. This theory suggests that such scandals mark 'critical junctures', or 'windows of opportunity', that open up the policy process to new ideas and new sources of expertise, and thus the replacement of established policy paradigms (Hall 1993; Hay 2002 – cited in Diamond 2014: 199-202). However, Diamond (2014) challenges this theory, arguing that it underestimates the resilience of British political institutions (200). Discussing evidence-based policy under Labour, he argues that the search for new solutions to social problems "was undertaken within the parameters of the BPT, centred on a top-down, elitist governing code" (264). This view is consistent with the APM and the emphasis this places on policy stability. On the other hand, applying Moran's regulatory state lens, we need to consider the possibility that independent evidence can be used to fend off resistance to politically directed reform within the old world of club government. Moran claims that; "the rise of neutral, non-majoritarian decision making, has actually exposed hitherto non-political domains to the power of elected politicians" (125). Thus, we must ask: *How is expert evidence utilised in the policy-making process?*

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of three different perspectives on British policy-making. These include the two dominant theoretical perspectives, Rhodes' DPM and Marsh et al's APM, but also Moran's alternative regulatory state perspective. Whereas as the DPM suggests a pivotal role for policy networks, the APM rejects this view and emphasises the

dominance of Whitehall departments over policy-making. Both models were developed on the basis of observed trends in British politics primarily under the Conservative Government (1979-1997). However, drawing on Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state, as well as research covering the Labour Government (1997-2010), it has been suggested that policy-making in Britain may have become a more politically driven process than either of these two models acknowledge. In order to interrogate this hypothesis new empirical research is needed. To address the key points of difference between theses three perspectives, it has been suggested that five aspects of policy-making needed to be considered: (1) the relationship between ministers and departments; (2) the influence of policy networks (3) ministerial oversight of local service delivery arrangements; (4) the role played by party leaders and the importance of inter and intra-party political competition; and (5) the use made of expert evidence in the policy-making process.

3) Methodology

This chapter provides provides an overview of the methodology followed in this case study. This includes a brief discussion of reasons for selecting a qualitative approach. It also reflects on the advantages and limitations of case study research and the use of elite interviews. The rationale for the selection of children's services policy as a case study and for the extended time-frame applied is also provided. Finally, this chapter provides a summary of the data collection and analysis processes that were followed.

Qualitative Approach

The purpose of this research is to respond to the question formulated in the previous chapter: *To what extent is British policy-making driven by policy networks, Whitehall departments or political actors?* This research challenges Rhodes' DPM, which emphasises the influence of non-governmental interest groups, or policy networks. It also challenges Marsh et al's rival APM which highlights the importance of partnership between ministers and government officials, and thus the dominance of Whitehall departments over the policy-making process. Moreover, building on Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state, it tests the hypothesis that British policy-making has become increasingly politicised. Toward this end this research seeks to examine the five aspects of policy-making also set out in the previous chapter: (1) the relationship between ministers and departments; (2) the influence of policy networks (3) ministerial oversight of local service delivery arrangements; (4) the role played by party leaders and the importance of inter and intra-party political competition; and (5) the use made of expert evidence in the policy-making process. Addressing each of these requires a detailed understanding of the interactions between a range of elite policy actors, and an appreciation of the political and organisational context of policy-making. Both the formal legislative and the informal 'behind closed doors' arenas of policy-making need to be considered. This challenge points towards a qualitative approach.

Following Marsh et al (2001: 1-4), this research was informed by critical realist philosophical assumptions. From a critical realist perspective, the utility of a behavioural approach to investigation of the policy-making process is rejected. It is assumed that it is not possible to simply observe policy-making from a distance, rather from a critical realist perspective we must consider the reports and interpretations of events by participants. It is accepted that different participants act on the basis of differing interpretations of social phenomena, and this in turn affects the outcomes of the policy-making process. However, rejecting an extreme

relativist position, it is assumed that there is a 'real' world which exists independent of our social construction of it. Moreover, whilst recognising the difficulties and limitations of social research, it is assumed that carefully designed research can improve our understanding of the policy-making process. Following the principle of triangulation, it is necessary to obtain a broad variety of participant's views, including those of politicians, civil servants, interest group representatives and independent policy advisers. Furthermore, these accounts of the policy-making process need to be corroborated against other sources of evidence.

Case Study Research

Yin (2009: 18) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". A case study is able to deal with multiple variables and utilise multiple sources of evidence. Thus, it can generate rich empirical detail, providing an in-depth understanding of social phenomena. There are no clearly defined methods or procedures for collecting and analysing data within a case study. The design and implementation of a case study is an iterative process. The advantage of this is that this allows the researcher to pursue multiple avenues of inquiry and generate potential insights that were unanticipated at the outset of the research.

However, a common criticism of case study research is that it can lack sufficient rigour and transparency (Yin 2009: 14). To guard against this, it is vital that those conducting such research strive to "understand the complex social world with empathy, while also attempting to be non-judgemental" (Vromen 2010: 257). Yin (2009: 5) argues that a hallmark of a good case study is the "rigorous and fair presentation of empirical data". Another common criticism of case studies is that they provide an insufficient basis for scientific generalisation. Yin's counterargument is that the findings of case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions (Yin 2009: 15). Thus, in so far as such propositions are clearly set out by the researcher, and the research is sufficiently rigorous and objective, the case study provides an appropriate method for exploring and developing new theories. A case study is therefore an appropriate form of inquiry in response to the research question set out above.

Elite Interviews

Data collection through elite interviews is a common feature of public policy case studies. Richards (1996: 199) defines an elite as "a group of individuals, who hold or have held, a privileged position in society and as such… are likely to have had more influence on political

outcomes than general members of the public". Elite individuals are likely to hold a more in depth knowledge and understanding of the public policy process than that which can be ascertained from formal records. Thus, elite interviews are an inevitable component of in depth policy research (Davies 2001: 74-75). They enable us to develop an understanding of the political and organisational context of policy-making and appreciate the importance of the ideologies, beliefs and motivations of policy actors (Aberbach and Rockman 2002; Lilleker 2007). More specifically, the use of semi-structured interviews enables the researcher to explore theoretical propositions, without imposing his or her own conceptual framework on interviewees (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 674). Furthermore, relatively open-ended interviews have the potential to generate fresh insights and avenues of inquiry that may have been unanticipated at the outset of the research. In this sense, they support the theory development aim of this research.

However, there are a number of challenges and potential pitfalls to research relying on data generated through elite interviews. The first challenge is to gain access to elite actors, and ensure that the programme of interviews is sufficiently representative of the various interests engaged in policy-making. In other words, it is important to hear all sides of the story (Goldstein 2002; Aberbach and Rockman 2002). Secondly, in conducting the interviews the researcher must be sufficiently prepared in order to maximise the utility of the interview, but without prejudicing the interview conversation. Richards (1996) suggests that researchers should compile a dossier on interviewees, as well as an interview schedule to be used as an aide memoir. Thirdly, analysing interview data also presents significant challenges. Richards (1996: 200) argues that interviews must not be conducted with a view to establishing 'the truth'. It must be recognised that different interviewees will hold different recollections of events, or may promote a particular interpretation of the policy-making process. Data from different interviews needs to be triangulated against other sources of evidence, such as official and media reports, in order to arrive at a consensus view. Where this is not possible, the researcher must present disagreements or ambiguities explicitly in the reported findings (Davies 2001).

This research was clearly directed towards developing our understanding of the role of a policy elite (politicians, officials and interest groups) in relation to the public policy-making process. The use of elite interviews was therefore highly appropriate. The final section of this chapter outlines the data collection and analysis process, including steps taken to overcome the challenges of, and guard against the potential pitfalls of, elite interviews, as noted above.

Case Study Selection and Time-Frame

Studying how public policies are formulated and implemented requires us to develop a detailed understanding of interaction between multiple actors across multiple arenas. Sabatier (1991: 148) argues that this requires the researcher to acquire substantive policy knowledge in a particular policy area, in order to understand the technical nature of discussions between policy actors. Furthermore, he suggests that the ideal time-frame for such research is a minimum of a decade (1991: 149). In Sabatier's view, policy studies following a shorter time-frame are problematic for two main reasons: (1) they often judge the impact of policy reform too prematurely; (2) policy change often occurs gradually, and can therefore go unnoticed. The optimal research design would be a comparative case study pooling data from multiple longitudinal studies – this was the design Marsh et (2001) followed. However, this would require substantial resources, and these are not available to the lone PhD researcher. This research was only able to look at children's services policy, but did so over an 18-year time frame covering the years 1997-2015. This allowed for an examination of multiple aspects of policy-making, predominantly under the Labour Government, but also covering the Conservative-led Coalition. This included:

- the emergence of new children's services priorities during the first Labour term;
- the development of the ECM Green Paper and the Children Act 2004;
- the post-legislative period of ECM delivery; and
- the development of children's services policy under the Coalition, including its response to the policy framework it inherited from Labour.

Children's services policy provided a critical test case as it had the potential to address all five aspects of policy-making included in the conceptual framework developed in the previous chapter:

1) Ministers and Departments

Children's services policy was an area of considerable activity at the national level under both the Labour and Coalition Governments. Moreover, ministers have often played a publically visible role, as the example of Labour's ECM reforms illustrates. It therefore provides a good opportunity to examine relations between ministers and civil servants.

2) *Policy networks*

The policy-making process for children's services has drawn in a wide range of actors representing both the statutory and charitable children's sectors. Formal and informal interaction between central policy-makers and interest groups is commonplace. Children's services policy-making therefore provides a good candidate for network governance.

3) *Service Delivery Arrangements*

The restructuring of service delivery arrangements has been a major focus of children's services policy in recent years. Experimentation with new local service delivery partnerships bringing together local statutory and charitable agencies was a key feature of early Labour policy initiatives such as Sure Start. Under the Children Act 2004 Labour mandated the merger of local authority education and children's social care services to create new unified Children's Services Departments (CSDs) under the leadership of a single Director of Children's Services (DCS). The Act also required the creation of multi-agency children's trusts in every local authority area. Under the Coalition Government local authorities were encouraged to experiment with new arrangements for the outsourcing of children's social care services.

4) *Party Leaders and Inter and Intra-Party Competition*

Both Blair and Brown took an interest and played a lead role in relation to different areas of children's social policy in the Labour era. Blair's interest was in education and crime and anti-social behaviour policy, whereas Brown championed the Government's child poverty strategy. Following his election as Conservative Party leader in December 2005, Cameron made social justice one of his policy priorities. As leader of the Coalition Government, Cameron commissioned reviews into key areas of children's policy including; child poverty, early intervention and child protection. Children's services policy therefore provides a good opportunity to examine the role of party leaders and the impact of inter and intra-party political competition on policy-making.

5) *Evidence-based Policy*

Party leaders and ministers under both the Labour and Coalition Governments have invariably claimed a commitment to evidence-based policy. It was claimed that Sure Start, Labour's early flagship children's services policy, was based on evaluations of the US Head Start programme and consultation with experts from the British charity sector. Also, policy reviews led by independent experts are a key feature of the children's services policy-making

process. Such reviews have commonly followed high profile cases of child abuse and an apparent failure of established policy and/or service delivery arrangements. The ECM Green Paper was officially presented as the Labour Government's direct response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (Laming 2003) published in January 2003. In November 2008 the case of Baby P drew attention to apparent failings in Labour's response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and precipitated the commissioning of further independent reviews of children's policy by the Labour and Coalition Governments.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from elite interviews was the key source of evidence in this research. The challenge of gaining access to elite policy-makers was successfully overcome through a strategy of 'snowballing' and polite persistence (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 673). Interviewees were selected on the basis of the prominent role they have played in relation to one or more aspect of children's services policy-making, but also to ensure a good representation of politicians, government officials, interest group representatives and independent experts. Interviewees included:

- Ministers (5)
- Political advisers (2)
- Departmental civil servants (8)
- Treasury civil servants (3)
- No10 civil servants (1)
- Charity sector leaders (8)
- Local authority directors (6)
- Academics/ independent expert advisers (7)

Total (40)

A number of interviewees moved between the civil service and the charity and local government sectors during the time frame for this research. However, to minimise the risk of identification, these interviewees have been categorised according to the sector they primarily represented in the policy-making process.

The following interviewees agree to be named:

- Paul Boateng (Chief Secretary to the Treasury: 2002-5)
- Charles Clarke (Secretary of State for Education: 2002-4)

- Margaret Hodge (Children's Minister: 2003-4)
- Beverley Hughes (Children's Minister: 2005-9).
- Tim Loughton (Shadow Children's Minster: 2001-10; Children's Minister: 2010-12)
- Professor Dame Eileen Munro (Led the Munro Review of Child Protection: 2010-11)
- Dame Moira Gibb (Chair of the Social Work Taskforce/ Reform Board: 2009-12)

All interviews were semi-structured and interviewees all received an interview schedule in advance. Questions were tailored towards the specific involvement interviewees had had in the children's services policy-making process. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. The data collected was coded in accordance with the five aspects of policy-making identified in chapter two. Inevitably interviewees sometimes had different recollections of events and attributed varying degrees of influence to the actors involved in policy-making. Therefore, applying the principle of triangulation interview data was cross referenced against circa 300 official policy publications, Select Committee minutes and media reports. It is recognised that this approach can never provide a definitive account of 'the truth'. However, in order to provide as much transparency as possible, and to invite counterargument, the conclusions set out in chapters four to seven follow a detailed exposition of the evidence collected. Three interviewees provided detailed comments on early drafts of these chapters.

4) Labour and Children's Services Before ECM: The Role of the Treasury (1997-2001)

This chapter examines the evolution of children's services policy during the first term of the Labour Government. It provides the necessary background to understand the development of children's services policy throughout the Labour era, including controversial plans for the restructuring of local government children's services as set out in the ECM Green Paper (HM Government 2003a). More specifically, this chapter focuses on the involvement of Treasury ministers and civil servants in the development of early Labour children's services policy initiatives. It is necessary to appreciate the significant role played by the Treasury in this period in order to understand the evolution of Labour children's services policy, as this and subsequent chapters illustrate.

The first section of the chapter focuses primarily on the question of party leaders' involvement in policy-making. This begins with a discussion of Blair's two key priorities in this policy area – education and problem young people, and Brown's key priority – tackling child poverty. This includes a brief overview of the way in which No 10 sought to progress Blair's priorities in Whitehall. The second section of the chapter is dedicated to a more detailed discussion of the Treasury's engagement in the children's services policy-making process. This discussion addresses the other four questions set out in chapter two relating to the role of ministers and departments, the influence of policy networks, the development of service delivery arrangements, and the use made of expert evidence. The third section examines the emergence of the Home Office Minister Paul Boateng's proposals for the restructuring of local service delivery arrangements towards the end of the first term, well ahead of the ECM Green Paper.

BLAIR AND BROWN'S CHILDREN'S POLICY PRIORITIES

Blair (1): Education Standards

Education reform was one of Labour's most important social policy priorities. In his 1996 Labour Party conference speech Blair famously declared that Labour's three priorities in government would be "education, education, education" (Blair 1996). In the 1997 election manifesto, education reform became the number one priority (Labour Party 1997). Education reform provided the perfect catch-all policy appealing to both the middle classes Labour

courted, as well as the party's traditional supporters. Blair and Brown both frequently deployed a 'social investment' narrative (Giddens 1998; Lister 2003) when discussing education reform. This narrative justified the prioritisation of education, on the grounds that higher levels of education could prevent wasteful future spending on benefits by making sure that children and young people were properly equipped to enter the labour market. Education reform was also framed in terms of the renewal of social democracy. The levelling of 'equality of opportunity' replaced Labour's traditional commitment to the levelling of economic inequality (Shaw 2007: chapter 3). The quotation below, taken from the Government's first education White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE 1997), captures these arguments:

> To overcome economic and social disadvantage and to make equality of opportunity a reality, we must strive to eliminate, and never excuse, under-achievement in the most deprived parts of our country… We are talking about investing in human capital in the age of knowledge. To compete in the global economy, to live in a civilised society and to develop the talents of each and every one of us, we will have to unlock the potential of every young person (DfEE 1997: 3).

In declaring that the focus of education reform would be on "standards not structures" (DfEE 1997: 66) the Government sought to side-step the issue of choice in education, which had been the central principle underpinning Conservative reforms. Central to the Conservative reform programme was the detachment of schools from LEA control. Schools were granted greater control of their own budgets and encouraged to opt-out of LEA control altogether. The idea was that this would create greater diversity and competition in the school system. Choice of school provided to parents would drive innovation and raise standards. New City Technology Colleges and Grant-Maintained Schools were created outside of LEA control. Ofsted was also established to lead a new national inspection system, previously managed locally by LEAs (Shaw 2007: 62). These reforms were opposed at the time by Labour as they were seen as an attack on the principle of comprehensive education, a central pillar of the collective-universal welfare state. For Labour's critics on the left, the focus on standards disguised an unwillingness to reverse the direction of education policy set by the Conservatives. What was presented by the Government as a non-partisan focus on standards, was reinterpreted as facilitating an extension of market principles in the governance of education. Targets, league tables and inspection were see as essential to establishing competition between schools (Muschamp et al 1999; Naidoo and Muschamp 2002).

However, this interpretation fails to acknowledge the substantial centralisation of education policy-making that occurred. The Government's aim was to even out disparities in the levels of access to and the quality of education provision nationally. Firstly, there was a commitment to improve access to, and the quality of, early-years (pre-school) education. The headline pledge was a free nursery education place for all 4 years olds whose parents wanted it. Secondly, in relation to primary schools there was a target of class sizes of no more than 30 for 5-7 year olds. Thirdly new national and school- level performance targets were introduced for primary and secondary schools. These were backed up by an enhanced inspection regime and the publication of more detailed performance tables to ensure accountability. At the primary level mandatory literacy and numeracy hours were added to the National Curriculum to drive the achievement of English and maths performance targets.

Given the importance Blair attached to education reform, it was an area of policy-making in which he sought to strengthen the influence of No10. One of the key institutional changes, designed to embed the education reform agenda, was the creation of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit. The Unit was headed up by Michael Barber who became a trusted adviser to Blair personally. Barber was later asked to set up and lead the PMDU at the start of the second term. Importantly the focus on education standards also required the Government to reinvigorate the capacity of LEAs to intervene in failing schools (DfEE 1997: chapter 3). Whilst there would be no reversal of financial controls devolved to schools under the Conservative's Local Management of Schools policy, the White Paper stressed that LEAs had "to challenge schools to raise standards continuously and apply pressure where they do not" (DfEE 1997: 27). LEAs were required to submit detailed Education Development Plans, outlining their commitment to driving up school standards in line with national targets, as a condition of increased funding for school improvement work. They were effectively set up as local agents of the DfEE.

This centralised approach to evening out disparities in the education system was consistent with Labour's historic commitment to collective-universal welfare. However, two important points regarding Blair's approach to education need to made. Firstly, education standards were narrowly defined and measured primarily in terms of pupil's achievement in statutory tests. It is argued below that the Treasury's commitment to tackling child poverty drew attention to a broader range of issues linked to the well-being and life chances of children and young people. Secondly, towards the end of the second term Blair distanced himself from the top-down model of welfare delivery and called for the expansion of market governance

mechanisms on education. He argued that more choice for parents, and greater competition between schools, would spur innovation and drive up levels of pupil attainment. This created a tension within the ECM reform process against the Treasury's more traditional top-down approach to welfare delivery. This was manifest in disagreement with regard to the role of schools and local authorities, as subsequent chapters will explain.

Blair (2): Problem Young People

Blair's other main pre-occupation in this area of policy was the perceived behavioural problems of a limited number of young people. As Shadow Home Secretary in 1993 Blair signalled that a future Labour Government would move closer to the authoritarian populist (Hall and Jacques 1983) social policy perspective adopted by the Conservatives. Blair competed with the then Conservative Home Secretary Michael Howard to sound tough on law and order, stealing the political initiative with his memorable phrase "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime". Furthermore, in the wake of the murder of the two-year old Jamie Bulger in February 1993 by two ten year-old boys, he placed a strong emphasis on youth justice in the inter-party political battles of this period (Frost and Parton 2009: 86).

Charman and Savage (2008: 105) argue that in office Blair remained mindful of the electoral imperatives of law and order policy, including youth justice. Thus, as with education policy, Blair sought to establish a greater degree of central control over policy-making. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 a new national Youth Justice Board was created. In each local authority area new Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were set up. YOTs sat outside of Social Services Departments (SSDs), reporting directly to local authority chief executives. One of the priorities for these new institutions was to increase the number of offences brought to justice. By 2007 this resulted in a 26 per cent increase in the number of young people subjected to criminal prosecution. Lower level anti-social behaviour was addressed through the issuing of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Also introduced in the 1998 Act, the initial uptake of ASBOs was slow. However, this increased dramatically following the intervention of Blair. In January 2003 he set up the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office and pushed the subsequent Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. By 2005 approximately 600 orders were issued per quarter, with juveniles accounting for 50 per cent of the total (Frost and Parton 2009: 86-91).

Although youth crime and anti-social behaviour remained Blair's primary concern, additional policy initiatives were also developed to tackle a broader range of perceived problem

behaviours amongst young people. Blair identified a need to develop a more joined-up cross-departmental approach to policy relating to young people. Initially, responsibility for the development of a cross-departmental children and family's strategy was handed to the Home Secretary Jack Straw, who was also widely regarded as supporter of an authoritarian populist approach. The tone of Straw's report, titled *Supporting Families* (Home Office 1998), was more conservative than the later attempt to articulate a cross-departmental strategy in ECM (HM Government 2003a). Whereas ECM places a strong emphasis on the needs of the individual child and the responsibilities of the state, Supporting Families positions the traditional family unit as the primary means of addressing the needs of children. Illustrating this, the report included a prominent commitment to strengthen the institution of marriage (chapter 4). The final chapter set out the Government's commitment to provide additional state support to families with serious problems. This included a commitment to develop targeted interventions to address the challenging behaviours of adolescents (chapter 5).

Responsibility for the development of these targeted interventions was handed to the SEU, which had also been set up by Blair in December 1997 and reported directly to him. The SEU's broader remit was to develop cross-departmental strategies to tackle 'social exclusion'. Blair and the SEU deployed the concept of social exclusion to draw attention to a wide range of social issues which required government attention. Importantly these issues included but were not limited to poverty. Poverty was defined as: "Lack of income, access to good-quality health, education and housing, and the quality of the local environment" (DSS 1999: 23). It was accepted that the principal cause of poverty was a lack of economic resources. However, it was claimed that the concept of social exclusion added "further dimensions" that needed to be addressed in social policy. Social exclusion was defined as:

> A short-hand label for what can happen when *individuals* or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown (DSS 1999: 23 - emphasis added).

In developing targeted interventions aimed at young people the SEU cited research claiming that "not all children born into low-income families fare badly in later life". It identified key 'risk factors' occurring during childhood and adolescence that were likely to limit the life chances of young people. These included: poor early development; poor school attendance; being in care; contact with the police; drug misuse; teenage parenthood and not participating in education, employment or training (NEET) between the ages 16-18 (SEU 1999; cited in DSS 1999: 43-44). The emphasis on the individual in initiatives to tackle social exclusion

provided a bridge between Labour's traditional redistributive perspective on poverty and welfare and the authoritarian populist perspective inherited from the Conservatives. It supported increased state intervention, but targeted at particular groups in society, particularly problem young people.

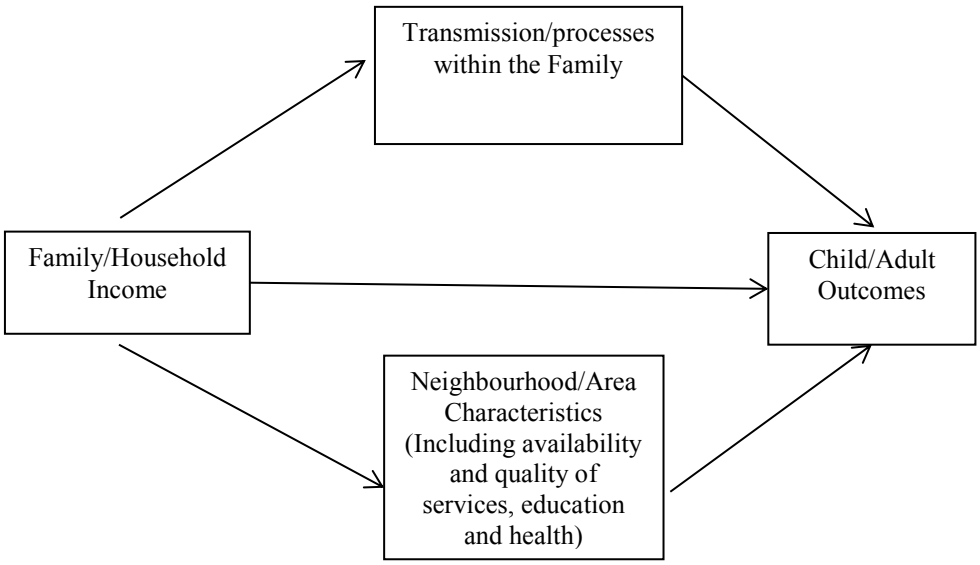
Brown: Child Poverty and 'Progressive Universalism'

In March 1999 Blair (1999a) famously announced Labour's aspiration to end child poverty in a generation. However, it was Brown who spoke more frequently about economic disadvantage. Furthermore, it was Brown who led the development and implementation of the Government's child poverty strategy from the Treasury. The clearest statement of the Treasury's perspective on child poverty is contained in the pre-budget report *Tackling Child Poverty: Giving Every Child the Best Possible Start in Lif*e (HM Treasury 2001). In his Foreword Brown demonstrates his commitment to Labour's traditional redistributive perspective on poverty and welfare. Linking the strategy to the birth of the welfare state, he states:

> As Beveridge knew, tackling child poverty and disadvantage is not about providing either more money or better public services; it is of necessity about both. It will require more resources to be devoted to raising the incomes of poor families (to tackle the need and unemployment Beveridge identified) and also to deliver the services on which we all depend (to provide high-quality healthcare, world-class education system and decent housing for all). It will also require us to ensure that public services take more account of the level of need in a locality (HM Treasury 2001: iii).

The diagram below, taken from the report, provides the rationale for two key strands of the child poverty strategy which were led by the Treasury: (1) income transfers through tax and benefit reform; and (2) the reform of public services to better meet the needs of disadvantaged children and families. The second strand was later referred to as *progressive universalism*. Elsewhere this was defined as "support for all, with more support for those who need it most" (HM Treasury and DfES 2005: 1). These two strands of the child poverty strategy are represented by the middle and lower chains in the diagram. Both are consistent with Labour's traditional redistributive perspective on poverty and welfare. The inclusion of the top strand is a reference to Blair's social exclusion perspective discussed above. As with most Labour policy documents, this report was careful to emphasise the compatibility of the separate strands of social policy led by No10 and the Treasury.

Figure 1: Links between child poverty and child outcomes (HM Treasury 2001: 3)



It was the Treasury's commitment to the principle of progressive universalism that drove its engagement in policy-making for children's services. The early flagship social policy inspired by this principle, and initiated by the Treasury, was the Sure Start programme for pre-school children and their parents in poor communities. Following the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) an initial commitment of £450m over three years was made to fund 250 local programmes. By 2004 £500m per year was committed to the establishment of 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres nation-wide (Eisenstadt 2011; HM Treasury 2004). The establishment of the Children's Fund following the 2000 Spending Review aimed to fill a similar perceived gap in the range of welfare services available to 5 to 13 year olds in the same communities. Following the Review, £450m was committed over three years. Both initiatives were founded on the claim that the existing mix of universal and targeted public services available to poor children and their families was inadequate. It was argued that universal health and education services did not provide the additional support these children required relative to their middle class peers, and that targeted services only got involved at points of crisis. Sure Start and the Children's Fund aimed to extend the remit of universal services and prevent the need for targeted intervention to address more acute needs at a later point in time.

It is argued in remainder of this chapter, and in the two subsequent chapters, that it was this commitment to the principle of progressive universalism which drove the Treasury's engagement in children's services policy-making throughout the Labour era, and was pivotal to the ECM reform programme. But it is important to recognise that Brown's vision for children's services was different to Blair's. The Treasury's analysis of poverty placed a greater emphasis on economic disadvantage as a determinant of life chances. Thus, it identified an estimated population of four million children and young people deserving of enhanced state support. This was a much larger population than the potential cohort of problem young people identified from Blair's social exclusion perspective. It also placed a greater emphasis on enhanced universal provision in order to prevent the emergence of problem behaviours, rather than the tougher targeted interventions to address them that Blair championed. Furthermore, from the progressive universal perspective, the narrow focus on standards of achievement (measured through statutory tests) in education policy, overlooked the broader range of challenges children growing up in poverty had to overcome in order reach the same levels of achievement as their middle class peers.

THE TREASURY, DEPARTMENTS AND THE CHILDREN'S CHARITIES

The Departmental Spending Review Process

Blair's attempt to centralise control over departmental policy-making has been described in detail by Michael Barber (2007), the former head of the PMDU and by Patrick Diamond (2014), former Head of Policy and Planning in No10. Diamond's account lends support to APM view of policy-making, emphasising the limits of No10's control over departmental ministers and officials (274-9). Barber's account is generally more upbeat with regard to the impact No10 had on departmental policy. However, he does also recognise the limits to prime ministerial power which Blair was not able to overcome (chapter 9). But in contrast to Diamond, Barber emphasises the constraints created by the power sharing arrangements between Blair and Brown, rather than the power of departmental ministers and officials. He is mindful of the confusing messages this arrangement sent to policy-makers. He states:

> Reading signals not just from their own ministers but from interaction with No10 advisers and Treasury officials, they [sought] to pick their way across a minefield … the system of dual power at the top and, more particularly the way it was played out in practice, caused real problems (Barber 2007: 306-7).

However, Barber's account, along with Diamond's, centres on the engagement of No10 in the policy-making process. He is careful not to suggest that No10 and the Treasury were in direct competition. Rather he emphasises the confusion that power sharing arrangements created in the *minds* of departmental policy-makers. However, the evidence collected for this research suggests that this understates the extent to which No10 and the Treasury sometimes pursued different priorities within the same policy area. Furthermore, accounts focused solely on the influence of No10 on departmental policy-making ignore the way in which the Treasury was able to exploit its strategic position in government, as the controller of public spending, to influence the content of departmental policy.

Reflecting on the limits of No10's influence over policy-making in this area, a charity sector leader interviewed for this research commented:

> You had the SEU which had done some brilliant reports on things that never got taken anywhere. Now that was because they were created in the Cabinet Office and to deliver them they had to go to one of what were called the delivery departments, and if the delivery departments don't want to deliver them then that's the end of it (interview with charity leader).

In contrast the Treasury's control over public spending gave it greater leverage over departments. From the outset the Treasury made clear its intention to use the spending review process to not only control public spending, but also to influence the content of departmental policy (HM Treasury 1998). Under the spending review process, beginning with the 1998 CSR, it negotiated Public Service Agreements (PSAs) with every government department. PSAs set out the Treasury's three-year allocation of resources to departments alongside an agreed list of performance targets. The inclusion of performance targets tied future spending allocations to compliance with policy priorities approved by the Treasury.

Under each spending review round the Treasury also set up a number of 'cross-cutting' reviews in areas of policy that were deemed to cross departmental boundaries. These reviews were managed by the Treasury. The reviews listened not only to the views of representatives from the relevant government departments, but also a wide range of external experts. Significantly, services for children were subject to a cross cutting review in every spending round under the Labour Government. In this early period, before the ECM structural reforms to central government, the lead departments for children and young people's policy were the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Department of Health (DoH) and the Home Office. Through the reviews the Treasury pooled departmental resources and created ring-fenced funding pots to fund policy initiatives that supported its policy priorities.

Unsurprisingly this was widely seen by departmental officials as Treasury interference in departmental business (interviews).

The selection of cross-cutting reviews and the process of bi-lateral negotiation between the Treasury and departments reflected a clear policy direction. As one senior Treasury official closely involved in the process explained:

> The Chancellor had put into its [The Treasury's] objectives, not only some of the obvious things you'd expect as a finance and economics department, but things like child poverty. So to have a Treasury that actually took child poverty, reduction of, as part of its objectives, I would guess, was relatively unique. It potentially changes the whole way the organisation is supposed to think (interview with Treasury official).

This determination to shape the content of departmental policy as well as the financial planning required the input of social policy experts. Consequently, Brown and his close advisers Ed Balls and Ed Miliband "were interested in spending time with, and in and around, people that knew something about policy and policy implementation" (interview with Treasury official). Experienced outsiders were recruited to bolster the capacity of the Treasury and limit dependence on the advice of departmental officials. In 2000 Lucy de Groot, the Chief Executive of Bristol City Council, was recruited to the post of Public Services Director which took the lead on Treasury-department negotiations[1]. As the next two subsections of this chapter illustrate, the Treasury also looked towards representatives of the children's charity sector in order to side-step departmental interests.

The Relationship with the Children's Charities

During the first term of the Labour Government, representatives of the children's charity sector gained unprecedented levels of access to ministers, political advisers and officials, including those based at the Treasury. Officially, dialogue with the sector was framed in terms of listening to the experts and gathering evidence on 'what works' in social policy. Brown stated that:

> A partnership between Government and the voluntary, community and faith sectors is the best way to tackle poverty and support families, as demonstrated by the fact that some of the most innovative projects of recent years have partnership with community organisations at their heart (HM Treasury 2001: iii).

[1] Significantly, for the story of ECM, de Groot was replaced in 2003 by Ray Shostak, the former director of children's services in Hertfordshire. In Hertfordshire Shostak had created the first integrated education and children's social services department in England, well before the statutory requirement introduced under the Children Act 2004. Shostak's role as advisor to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Paul Boateng, who led the development of the ECM Green Paper, is considered in more detail in the following chapter.

However, if we examine the relationship between the Treasury and the children's charity sector carefully, it becomes clear that this did not constitute a clear example of policy simply following the evidence of experts. Rather, representatives of the sector were co-opted by Treasury policy actors in order to generate external pressure on political and departmental factions within government. In other words, the children's charity sector helped the Treasury to counter the alternative policy priorities of No10 and departmental interests who sought to resist Treasury interference in policy-making.

Firstly, it is important to note that the close relationship in government between Labour and the children's charity sector was one forged during the party's long period in opposition. The large charities, in particular, provided Labour with research evidence illustrating the impact of Conservative welfare policies on children and young people, but particularly those growing up in the most disadvantaged families and communities. Unable to influence the Conservative Government, the sector was hopeful that a future Labour Government would prioritise the welfare of children and take steps to address the issue of child poverty. It appealed to the party's historic commitment to economic redistribution.

Labour's election victory in 1997 created a sense of hope and excitement in the children's charity sector. For the first time in decades the sector felt a close ideological, and in some cases personal, alignment with the government of the day. A charity sector leader seconded into the government during this period described the relationship after 1997 in the following terms:

> There was a great commonality of interests and ambition, even though we might have fallen out with government sometimes about whether we thought they were a bit too interfering, micro-managing, too structural. There were different strands of thought and policy within government on children which changed throughout the Labour years, but basically it was a very close and comradely kind of relationship, and the truth is lots of people working in the children's sector at that time were Labour Party members, Labour Party activists, and were just very at home. It was very easy to work together, very much shared values (interview with charity leader seconded into DfEE)

The reference to the different strands of Labour policy in the above quote is important. The sector shared the Treasury's redistributive perspective on poverty, whilst in general it opposed Blair's authoritarian populist initiatives (interviews). Thus, it supported Brown in his intra-party battle to promote the redistributive dimension of Labour policy. The example of the End Child Poverty Coalition (ECPC) illustrates how Brown sought to downplay these shared interests, and the often close personal ties between his advisers and the sector. The ECPC was a vehicle through which a large number of children's charities came together to

campaign for action to address child poverty. However, this was not an example of a "self-steering inter-organisational network" (Rhodes 1997: 5). Members of the ECPC interviewed for this research explained that Brown nurtured its external critique of government policy in order to keep the pressure on the Government to address child poverty. Illustrating the ECPC's dependence on Brown, access to government practically disappeared overnight after the 2010 general election (interviews).

Given a broad alignment of priorities with the Treasury, representatives of the sector also provided a trusted source of expertise with which to counter perceived vested interests in departments (interview with DfES official). However, after the initial enthusiasm of Labour ministers for widespread consultation with the sector, charity sector actors found that access to the senior levels of the Treasury became increasingly restricted to an exclusive circle of sector representatives. Although it was the small local community and voluntary organisations which were eulogised in official policy statements, in reality it was the established voices in the sector, with their superior policy development and lobbying resources, who enjoyed Treasury access. This included the 'big four' children's charities: The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), NCH (later renamed Action for Children), Barnardo's and the Children's Society. One charity leader interviewed explained that these organisations fulfilled a 'think-tank' function for the Treasury. In addition to the Big Four the National Children's Bureau (NCB) also assumed an important role in helping the Treasury to develop concrete proposals to address child poverty and articulate the Treasury's priorities in a language which would "feel right to the sector" (interview with Treasury official).

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) and the Preventative Role of Mainstream Services

Formed in 1963, the NCB was set up to represent a diverse range of organisations working with children across the statutory and charitable sectors. As such, it could claim to be a representative voice for the children's sector, thus providing the Treasury with a convenient and manageable source of advice. Furthermore, whilst much smaller than the big four, NCB was primarily a policy development organisation. As one interviewee explained, it was full of "policy wonks". Additionally, a number of people interviewed for this research identified NCB's chief executive Paul Ennals as a particularly "adroit operator" (interview with DfES official). Ennals had established his reputation under the Conservative Government whilst at the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB). In this post he had championed greater integration of services for disabled children and children with special education needs. He

also had close ties with the Labour Party, his father having served as a minister in the Wilson Government. Throughout the Labour period Ennals had regular contact with the Treasury leadership including Brown (interviews).

One of the key policy ideas promoted by Ennals whilst he was at the RNIB, and by the NCB both before and following his appointment as chief executive in 1998, was the closer integration of children's services. This was based on the argument that many children and families relied upon the support of multiple children's services agencies, but that the support provided was often poorly co-ordinated, making it less efficient and less effective. The argument made was that better integration across professional and organisational boundaries, as well as between the statutory and charitable sectors, could deliver more holistic and properly co-ordinated packages of support to children and families that needed it. This required a commitment to multi-agency working and service integration not just at the local level, but also amongst central government policy-makers. This idea chimed with both Blair and Brown's commitment to break-up the departmental silos in Whitehall and 'join-up' policy-making.

The NCB's case for the reform of children's services was articulated in the report *Preventative Work with Families: The Role of Mainstream Services* (Sinclair et al 1997). This report emphasised the role that mainstream services needed to play in supporting the delivery of more effective support to children and families. The report defined mainstream services as those which are universally available and have open access. In contrast specialist and targeted services were defined as those accessed only via a professional referral. Examples of mainstream services include schools and primary health care (general practice). Specialist or targeted services include specialist social work services (e.g. child protection) and child mental health services (chapter 2). It was argued that mainstream services needed to play a greater role in helping to identify and address the additional needs of economically disadvantaged children and young people. It was argued that *early intervention* to address these needs could *prevent* poor outcomes in later childhood or adult life and the subsequent need for expensive specialist or targeted interventions. It is illustrated below that the case for reform articulated by the NCB became central to the development of Sure Start and the Children's Fund, two Treasury led policy instruments. Furthermore, it continued to inform the Treasury's progressive universal vision for children's services throughout the Labour era, and formed a cornerstone of the case made for structural reform under the Children Act 2004. Anticipating these reforms, the report states:

> Ultimately it may be necessary to review the span of operational control of public officials to ensure that it is bounded in a way that allows objectives to be tackled with the right combination of resources. This may go beyond the current understanding of Children's Services Planning to a more fundamental restructuring of children's services across all sectors and services (Sinclair et al 1997: 66).

Treasury Policy Instruments

Sure Start

The Sure Start programme, which began in 1998, was widely regarded as the flagship Treasury social policy. When it was launched the programme included 250 local schemes in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the country. Each local scheme was tasked with developing the early intervention and preventative role of mainstream health and pre-school services for children under the age of 5 and their parents. A substantial investment of £450m over three years was allocated to these first local schemes (Eisenstadt 2011). Officially the programme was presented as an outcome of the Sure Start Review, one of the cross-cutting reviews in the 1998 CSR. The review process considered evidence from a wide range of external sources. Furthermore, the programme was presented as being directly modelled on the Head Start programme in the United States. This programme, also targeted at pre-school children, had been first established in the 1960s as a Great Society programme and strong evidence had been gathered demonstrating its effectiveness. Furthermore, this evidence supported the economic argument that early intervention saved public money in the long run by preventing the development of acute problems later in childhood.

However, evidence collected for this research points towards the importance of a pre-existing political commitment to develop pre-school services. Thus, the review process was more about programme design and generating support than it was about evaluating the need for such a programme. A Treasury official involved in the review explained that:

> They [Labour] were really interested in how to do better for poor families and poor children, that was very much a feature of their government. That created a space within which officials like Norman [Glass] could be quite radical and say right we will go out and talk to the voluntary sector and listen to what they are saying, which felt quite radical at the time, and the political emphasis on the importance of child poverty definitely helped make the space for that…We were told by the top of the office that we ought to think big on this. By which they meant - don't just come up with a proposal for 10 pilots that cost 10k each (interview with Treasury official).

In an interview for this research, Beverley Hughes (Children's Minister 2004-09) agreed that there was a prior commitment to establish the programme:

> Certainly we recognised the economic argument, and that is very much evident in the findings from the States – they reckon there is a one in seven return on investment in children and young people. But the reason this was a policy priority was to do with our commitment to reducing inequality in society (interview with Beverley Hughes).

The review team also recognised that it could not simply transfer a policy initiative embedded in the US welfare system. The review also looked for examples of effective schemes at home. However, there was a predisposition towards the evidence presented by representatives of the children's charity sector rather than the perceived vested interests in central and local government. Furthermore, from the outset, it was clear that the Treasury envisaged a prominent role for the children's charity sector in the delivery of local schemes. One of the charity leaders who gave evidence to the review, interviewed for this research, recalled how uncritically evidence from the charity sector was received:

> They called for evidence from all these outside groups like the charity I was working for, and it was quite funny because we all wrote in stuff that we *believed,* that the Treasury thought was evidence. There was no scientific basis, it was what we believed. But for some reason they took more credence against what we wrote in than from what the departments were telling them…. Was any of this tested against really rigorous evaluation? No (interview with charity leader).

Having led the review, the Treasury went on to lead the process of setting up the Sure Start Unit in government. Significantly it recruited Naomi Eisenstadt, chief executive of the children's charity the Family Services Unit, to lead the unit. Although Eisenstadt was officially appointed as a civil servant, the recruitment process and the management arrangements for the new unit were designed to protect ministerial authority and minimise the potential for the capture of the unit by departmental officials. Officially Eisenstadt was recruited by civil servants, yet it was clear that ministers had a veto power over who was appointed (interviews). Although based in the DfEE, the Sure Start Unit was established as an inter-departmental unit with a ring-fenced budget, and with reporting lines into ministers in both DfEE and DoH. A DfEE official interviewed for this research commented that officials such as Eisenstadt were not regarded by ministers in the same way as career civil servants. They were more trusted than career officials. This was because they were considered to have a greater knowledge of service delivery and, above all, a commitment to reform:

> They had a degree of independence from the Department. The leaders of these units had a status which was more prominent than us civil servants…There was quite a hands-on delivery operation as well as developing some of the policy, and it was very much in the spirit of New Labour, experimentation with different ways of doing things in government (interview with DfEE official).

The Children's Fund

The establishment of the Children's Fund was an outcome of the Children at Risk Review, one of the cross-cutting reviews in the 2000 spending review (HM Treasury 2000). The aims of the programme were similar to those of the Sure Start programme, although the target group was children between the ages of 5 and 13. Again it was argued that mainstream services needed to work together and do more to address the additional needs of economically disadvantaged children. A prominent role for local children's charities was also envisaged. £450m was committed over three years, to be distributed amongst the most economically disadvantaged communities.

As with Sure Start, the aims of the Children's Fund were consistent with the Treasury's perspective on poverty and welfare and the vision of progressive universal services. However, although the scheme was presented as an outcome of the Children at Risk Review, directed by the Treasury, its origins can be traced back to a report by one of the Policy Action Teams (PATs) set up by the SEU directed by Blair. The emergence of the Children's Fund from this starting point provides an example of how the Treasury was able to promote its perspective on poverty and welfare ahead of the social exclusion perspective championed by Blair and the SEU.

The rationale for the Children's Fund programme first appeared in the SEU report: *Policy Action Team 12: Young People* (SEU 2000). Building on the earlier work of the SEU, the terms of reference for PAT 12 included a focus on the 'risk factors' associated with the social exclusion of specific groups of young people aged 13 to 19. However, presented by the Home Office Minister Paul Boateng, the report emphasised the underlying importance of economic disadvantage as a driver of the life chances of all young people. Consequently, its primary recommendation was to improve the services available to younger children (aged 5 to 13) in order to deliver earlier intervention and prevent the development of more acute needs in adolescence. This shifted the focus from the relatively small cohort of problem young people that concerned Blair, towards the much larger population of children aged 5 to 13 growing up in poverty. The report stated that "emerging evidence suggests that on average the state spends 14 per cent less money on young people in the most deprived areas than on the average young person" (49). This was explained by the higher concentrations of children living in disadvantaged communities and the higher demands this placed on services. Boateng had sought to strike a balance between the social priorities of Blair and Brown (interview with Paul Boateng). Thus, the PAT 12 report is carefully framed in language of

social exclusion developed by the SEU. Yet its analysis and recommendations were more consistent with the Treasury's social policy perspective. The Treasury directed Children at Risk Review followed this perspective, leading to the establishment of the Children's Fund.

PAT 12 and the Children at Risk Review were significant for another reason. In setting out the case for the Children's Fund Boateng drew attention to concerns within the Government regarding the slow delivery of earlier policy initiatives such as Sure Start. Blair (1999b) had by now made his famous "scars on my back' speech, expressing his frustration at the pace of public service reform and directing criticism at perceived vested interests in Whitehall and the wider public sector. Thus, on the pre-text of ensuring the successful implementation of the Children's Fund, Boateng argued for the structural reform of central government in order to integrate policy-making for children and young people. The Report declared that:

> The PAT believes that at the root of these problems lies a structural weakness – the failure of existing structures to provide a coherent national approach to policy on young people at risk. For decades, no-one has had clear responsibility for making this happen, either in central or local government. This has allowed the increased focus on agencies' individual objectives to lead to less focus on the problems that straddle boundaries. Unless this is addressed, delivery and design of new policies may fall short of what the Government wants to achieve; indeed there is a risk that new initiatives could actually add so much confusion that their underlying goals are seriously jeopardised (SEU 2000: 59).

Following the Children at Risk Review the inter-departmental Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) was created in central government. The CYPU's remit was not only to manage the Children's Fund programme, but also to co-ordinate all aspects of inter-departmental policy-making relating to children and young people. The unit initially reported into Boateng in the Home Office, in his newly created post of Minister for Young People. Althea Efunshile was recruited from Lewisham LEA to head up the CYPU. Her deputy Barbara Hearn, was seconded from NCB. Significantly, Hearn was one of the co-authors of *Preventative Work with Families* (Sinclair et al 1997). Whilst Blair sanctioned and supported the unit, it was evident that its focus would be on the delivery of the Treasury's vision for children's services. In the next chapter, the important contribution the CYPU went on to make to the development of the ECM reform programme is outlined.

The creation of the CYPU addressed concerns regarding the lack of integration in children's services policy-making at the national level. However, by the end of the first term of the Labour Government, concerns regarding the delivery of children's services reform at the local level remained unaddressed. By this point it had become clear that the loosely regulated

partnership approach to service delivery, relied upon to deliver initiatives such as Sure Start, was insufficient. Furthermore, there was a strong perception amongst ministers that local government, and local authority SSDs in particular, presented the main obstacle to reform and a drain on the dynamism of the charitable sector (interviews). Consequently, by the end of the first term, and well ahead of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and the ECM Green Paper, the structural reform of SSDs had emerged as a distinct possibility. This final section of the chapter considers the emergence of this reform within the context of the Treasury's progressive universal vision for children's services.

PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSALISM AND LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS

The Role of Local Authority SSDs

Informed by the principle of progressive universalism, the Treasury envisaged an expanded remit for mainstream local children's services agencies to better meet the needs of children growing up in poverty and prevent the need for costly specialist or targeted interventions. It was argued that closer co-ordination across statutory and charitable agencies was needed in order to deliver more integrated, and therefore more efficient and effective, services to children, young people and families. Interestingly, the problem of poorly co-ordinated services was one of the primary concerns which had led to the establishment of the Seebohm Committee in 1968 and the subsequent creation of unified local authority SSDs under the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act (Hall 1976). The new departments brought together the previously separate children's departments and health and welfare departments responsible for the care of vulnerable adults. The role of the new SSDs was not just to provide care for those with the most acute needs, but also to co-ordinate a range of other local services such as health, education, and housing. Frost and Parton (2009: 10) argue that the new SSDs were then seen as a "fifth social service… the personalized, humanistic dimension of the welfare state". Importantly, significant trust was placed in the hands of professional social workers to lead these departments and fulfil this function. Frost and Parton continue, arguing that the "primary tool" available to SSDs was "the professional worker's personality and understanding of human relationships", and that "the early 1970s marked the high point of optimism and confidence in social work". It is important to note that the social work profession had been very well represented on the Seebohm Committee (Hall 1976).

However, the co-ordinating function of SSDs was never properly realised. SSDs were created at a moment just before the onset of a long fiscal crisis. During this crisis the welfare consensus weakened and the autonomy granted to public service professions came to be questioned. The social work profession came under particular criticism in the wake of a series of apparent 'failures' to protect children. Parton (1985) pinpoints the Maria Colwell Inquiry in 1974 as a crucial turning point for the profession. The then Conservative Secretary of State and disciple of the New Right, Keith Joseph, led the backlash against the expansionist Seebohm departments highlighting their failure to protect children from abuse. From this emerged tighter regulation of SSD practice and the re-emergence and strengthening of child protection social work as a specialism within SSDs. The tighter regulation of this aspect of social work diverted SSDs from the wider co-ordinating and community based function envisaged by the Seebohm Committee.

However, in the wake of the *Cleveland Inquiry* (Secretary of State for Social Services 1988), the profession was criticised for an apparent eagerness to take children away from their families and for neglecting its broader duty to co-ordinate support for families in difficulty (Parton 2014: chapter 2). Responding to this, the Children Act 1989 set out a comprehensive legal framework for children's social work. Section 47 of the Act codified SSD's duty to "protect children from significant harm". Section 17 set out SSD's broader responsibility to co-ordinate "family support" services for "children in need". However, the report *Messages from the Research* (DoH 1995), commissioned by the DoH to evaluate the implementation of the Act, suggested that local authority SSDs were focused primarily on their duties under Section 47 of the Act and that insufficient resources were being dedicated to the fulfilment of duties under Section 17. This fuelled the 'refocusing debate' amongst social work professionals and academics. The conclusion reached was that a greater focus on the co-ordination of multi-agency family support was needed in order to keep children with their families. The election of Labour in 1997 opened up the possibility that neglect of the broader remit of SSDs might be addressed by the Government.

'Modernising' Social Services

The first comprehensive statement of the Labour Government's approach to social services reform was the *Modernising Social Services* White Paper (DoH 1998a). In his foreword the new Secretary of State Frank Dobson stated:

> One big trouble social services have suffered from is that up to now no Government has spelled out exactly what people can expect or what the staff are expected to do. This Government is to change all that (DoH 1998a: Dobson Foreword).

The White Paper went on to establish three "priority aims" for children's social services (para 3.7). The first two aims were uncontroversial in so far as they related to the well-established core functions of SSDs. The first covered the duties under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to protect children from significant harm. The second objective challenged local departments to raise the quality of care for looked-after children. More detailed performance objectives and quantitative performance indicators were later developed (DoH 1999).

Modernising Social Services followed a top-down managerial approach that was evident elsewhere in government. Clearly specified central government instructions and performance targets were preferred to local or professional self-regulation. In Moran's (2007) terms, its approach was high modernist. Nonetheless, DoH officials and SSD directors interviewed for this research suggested that in this period the approach to policy-making was relatively open and consultative. SSD representatives had greater access to ministers and officials than they had had under the Conservatives and, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, that they would have during the development of the ECM reform programme. Representatives of SSDs were involved in the development of the new performance framework and were relied upon by DoH to support its implementation. Under the *Quality Protects* programme (DoH 1998b) a network of regional advisers were recruited from SSDs to support the Department. Furthermore, the *Quality Protects* programme was widely supported by SSD representatives for its partnership approach and the financial rewards it offered in return for compliance.

Significantly, however, *Modernising Social Services* never properly addressed concerns regarding the fulfilment of SSD responsibilities under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, highlighted in the refocusing debate. The third priority aim in the White Paper was somewhat vaguely stated. It urged local authority SSDs to:

> Improve the life chances of children in care, and others ("children in need") who need social services' support, in particular through improving their health and education and support after they leave care (DoH 1998a: para 3.7)

Clearer guidance and performance expectations relating to children leaving care were later published. However, the expectations with regard to the larger population of children in need and the co-ordination of multi-agency family support were not clearly specified. The only significant guidance published was the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need* (DoH 2000). However, this case level guidance leaves significant room for local

interpretation and offers no guidance on departmental objectives or resourcing. On the other hand, *Modernising Social Services* did seek to allay the concerns of SSD representatives by appearing to rule out structural re-organisation as a solution. It was stated:

> Although there are often difficulties in bringing together different agencies' responsibilities, major reorganisation of services boundaries – always a tempting solution – does not provide the answer. This would create new boundaries and lead to instability and diversion of management effort (DoH 1998a: ara 6.3).

Towards Structural Reform

Dobson's consultative and conciliatory approach to engagement with representatives of local authority SSDs was in marked contrast to many other Labour ministers who held more suspicious and often hostile attitudes towards local government (interviews). Amongst those ministers was Paul Boateng. Boateng had extensive personal experience of local government. Furthermore, prior to leading PAT12 from his post in the Home Office, and the ECM Green Paper from his position in the Treasury, Boateng served as a junior minister under Dobson in DoH. Here he held responsibility for children's social services. During his stint at DoH, Boateng, with the support of his Chief Inspector Herbert Laming, adopted a "pretty robust approach to local authorities and local authority failure. They would haul local authorities in and have some very tough conversations with them" (interview with DoH official). Needless to say, Boateng's style did not endear him to SSD leaders (interview with LA director).

As key ministers saw local authorities in general as potential obstacles to innovation, and SSDs were tainted by a long history of perceived failure, ministers looked towards community and voluntary organisations to support the implementation of Sure Start and the Children's Fund. In contrast to local authorities, ministers saw such groups as a source of innovation and dynamism in the heart of local communities. As Secretary of State with responsibility for Sure Start, David Blunkett (despite his local government background) emerged as a strong advocate of community and voluntary sector led local delivery partnerships (interviews). It was hoped that charity sector leadership of multi-agency partnerships, which included the statutory public agencies from local government and health, would prove more effective in developing the preventative role of public services than was the case under the leadership of SSDs. However, it gradually became clear that whilst community and voluntary groups nominally chaired local partnerships, it was only local government, and in some instances the large children's charities, that had the bureaucratic

capacity to act as the financially accountable body (interviews with officials). By default, local government was leading the majority of local partnerships.

The apparently slow pace of implementation under Sure Start served to fuel pre-conceptions about local government and SSDs in particular. By the time Boateng became involved in the establishment of the Children's Fund, he was clear that successful implementation would require organisational reform at the local level to match the realignment of the departmental silos in central government. Boateng's experience of working with SSDs left him in no doubt that they could not be trusted to assume the co-ordinating role required at the local level. His statement below is unequivocal.

> The notion that one would look solely to the leadership of directors of social services isn't one to which I would adhere. Watch this space is what I'd add. You're going to see policy develop. It is early days in terms of my role as Minister for Young People. We have to break the silos down and until we do we're not going to be able to address the needs of children and young people. So to get hung up on what the status quo was before this government came to office, in which social services was the lead, I just do not see social services as the lead…. They have let children down year and year upon year. Now that's beginning to change. But the notion that we can just leave it to the social services is fanciful frankly (Boateng 2000).

The structural solution to the problem of SSD performance was thus firmly on the table long before the scandal of Victoria Climbié Inquiry and the subsequent ECM Green Paper.

Conclusion

The main contribution of this chapter has been in relation to the question of party leaders' involvement in policy-making. It has been argued that both Blair and Brown set out clear policy priorities which affected the development of children's services policy during Labour's first term. The steps taken by No 10 and the Treasury to embed these priorities in Whitehall have been described. Moreover, it has been argued that the Treasury was particularly well positioned in government to promote Brown's commitment to tackling child poverty and the principle of progressive universal services, given its control over public spending. Thus, the view, underpinning both the DPM and APM, that party leaders play only a peripheral role in relation to the policy-making process has been questioned.

This chapter has also begun to address the other four questions posed in chapter two. The example of Frank Dobson as Secretary of State in DoH lends support to the APM perspective, and the view that ministers generally seek to work with departmental civil servants to progress established policies. On the other hand, Paul Boateng at the Home Office provides a good example of a minister seeking to challenge departmental policy priorities and

policy-making processes, as Moran's thesis predicts. As chair of the SEU's review of young people's policy (SEU 2000), Boateng successfully argued for the creation of the Children's Fund and the new inter-departmental CYPU. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that Boateng was successful because his proposals were consistent with the Treasury's progressive universal vision for children's services. This reaffirms the argument that party leaders played more than a peripheral role in relation to the development of children's services policy in this period.

This chapter has also examined the opening-up of the policy-making process to representatives of the children's charity sector, providing an opportunity to examine the question of policy network influence over policy. Charity representatives offered welcome advice to government policy-makers, and played an important role in the development of policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund, as well as helping government policy-makers to articulate the Treasury's progressive universal vision for children's services. However, whilst this is suggestive of a shift towards network governance, there was no evidence to suggest that it was the charities who were driving policy. Rather, there was an alignment of interests in this period. Firstly, there was a shared commitment to addressing child poverty. This was a priority that a number of charities had long campaigned for, but it was also consistent with Labour's historic commitment to reducing inequality (Shaw 2007). Secondly, ministers saw the charity sector as alternative service providers, and thus a means through which to reduce dependence on perceived vested interests in local government. From the perspective of the charities, this presented an opportunity to attract funding.

The discussion of the role of children's charities as alternative service providers also begins to address the question of service delivery arrangements. It is clear that Labour ministers took a close interest in the design of new service delivery partnerships for policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. However, dissatisfaction with the pace of policy delivery under local service delivery partnerships spurred ministers to contemplate further reform, as Moran's concept of hyper-innovation predicts. It was in this context that Boateng criticised the contribution of local authority SSDs and called for a radical restructuring of local children's services to better promote the welfare of children.

Finally, the example of the Sure Start Review has offered an insight in relation to the use of evidence and policy-making. It showed ministers' interest in service delivery arrangements was reflected in an eagerness to listen to the advice of charity leaders. This observation lends

support to the hypothesis that ‘evidence’ is sought in order to re-affirm rather than determine policy priorities. This question is addressed more comprehensively in the following chapter.

5) The Victoria Climbié Inquiry, the ECM Green Paper and the Children Act 2004 (2002-04)

Victoria Climbié was an eight-year-old girl living in the London Borough of Haringey. Following months of horrific abuse, Victoria died in February 2000. Victoria's aunt and her partner were convicted of murder in January 2001. Victoria had been known to multiple public service agencies across London, yet none had been able to prevent the abuse she suffered, or her murder. Ministers responded by commissioning the former Chief Inspector of Social Services, Lord Laming, to conduct a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Victoria's death and to investigate the state of child protection services nationally. In the Government's official narrative, the ECM Green Paper and the subsequent Children Act 2004 provided a direct response to Lord Laming's (2003) report. Thus, this period of Labour rule offers an opportunity to closely examine the use of expert evidence in policy-making.

The first section of the chapter examines Lord Laming's inquiry. This includes a discussion of the background to the inquiry and its terms of reference, as well as a summary of Lord Laming's recommendations. The Government's official response is also considered. The second section interrogates the official claim that ECM was a direct response to Lord Laming, exploring the actual influence of the inquiry and the connection between ECM and the Treasury's progressive universal policy framework. This necessarily requires a discussion of the use of evidence in policy-making, but also a focus on the role played by ministers in driving policy reform in Whitehall and at the local level of service delivery. Moreover, the focus on the Treasury framework connects this chapter to the discussion of party leaders and policy-making opened up in the previous chapter. The third section reflects on the influence of departmental interests and policy networks during this period of children's services policy-making.

THE VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ INQUIRY

Background to the Inquiry

Until July 2003 responsibility for children's social services policy was held by the DoH. Responsibility was then transferred to the new inter-departmental Children and Young People's (CYP) Directorate hosted by the DfES. Within DoH the primary focus for policy-makers was improving implementation of the Children Act 1989. The new local authority

SSD performance framework, created following the *Modernising Social Services* White Paper (DoH 1998a), was clearly directed towards this end, as was noted in the previous chapter. Significantly, prior to the shift to DfES, ministers and departmental officials routinely worked alongside representatives of local authority SSDs and the social work profession. SSD representatives had been recruited by DoH to act as regional advisers on implementation of the *Quality Protects* (DoH 1998b) programme, an initiative tied to *Modernising Social Services*. Perhaps more importantly, the Social Services Inspectorate was based in DoH, and the Chief Inspector for Social Services remained a prominent figure, and a trusted adviser to ministers and officials (interviews with DoH officials). Furthermore, in the White Paper, the structural reform of local SSDs appeared to have been ruled out as a solution to underperformance (DoH 1998a, para 6.3).

However, by the time Victoria's aunt and partner had been convicted in January 2001, Labour ministers had become increasingly frustrated by the slow pace of social policy delivery and had developed a much stronger appetite for public sector structural reform. Furthermore, Frank Dobson had been replaced by Alan Milburn as Secretary of State for Health. Milburn was widely regarded as one of Blair's most loyal supporters and a strong advocate for public sector reform. It was within this context that the Chief Inspector Denise Platt sought to prevent a knee-jerk political response to Victoria's case, persuading ministers that a public inquiry into the case was needed before any changes could be set in train (interview with DoH official).

Nevertheless, the scope of the inquiry and the choice of chair reflected the appetite for wide-ranging reform. The official narrative of ECM sought to convey the impression that it was the shocking circumstances of Victoria's death that had led to a rethink on social services reform. Indeed, Lord Laming had catalogued the failings across four SSDs, as well as two local authority housing departments, two Metropolitan Police child protection teams, an NSPCC managed family centre, and two hospitals. This was seen to indicate a widespread "organisational malaise" (Laming 2003: pars 1.20-122) across agencies charged with protecting vulnerable children. However, the scope of the inquiry in the first instance reflected the mood of the party leadership. The Victoria Climbié Inquiry was the first to be set up under three separate pieces of legislation: Section 81 of the Children Act 1989; Section 84 of the NHS Act 1977; and Section 49 of the Police Act 1996. Furthermore, the terms of reference for the inquiry were not limited to establishing the circumstances of Victoria's death and the failings of the local agencies involved. The inquiry was also set up to include

an examination of the national system for child safeguarding, and to make appropriate proposals for reform. Accordingly, this became an expert rather than a judge led inquiry. It required the leadership of someone with extensive knowledge and experience in relation to child safeguarding. A DoH official involved explained:

> What ministers wanted was not just an identification of the facts, the story as it were. That's purely retrospective. What they wanted was to use the evidence as a springboard to make recommendations for organisational and systems change for the future. So what they wanted was somebody to do the inquiry who was deeply immersed in the subject matter (interview with DoH official).

Lord Laming was well-qualified in this regard, having had a long career in social services. Starting as a social worker, he rose to the position of Director of Hertfordshire SSD, before later serving as the Government's Chief Social Worker between 1991 and 1998.

Structural Reform to Address Child Safeguarding

In his report Lord Laming was clear that the legislative framework of the Children Act 1989 remained sound. In his view the failings identified in Victoria's case, and the wider shortcomings he highlighted nationally, related to the implementation of the Act. The Act places a duty on local authorities to "safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable children" in their local area. SSDs are given responsibility for completing assessments of the needs of individual children and families as well as co-ordinating the delivery of multi-agency packages of "family support" as appropriate (DoH 2000: 4-5). Echoing findings in earlier DoH commissioned research (DoH 1995), Lord Laming expressed concern regarding the way in which various agencies involved in Victoria's case had interpreted and discharged their duties under Sections 17 and 47 of the Act (paras 17.98-17.111). Specifically, he argued that agencies had focused primarily on those children categorised under Section 47 of the Act as suffering or likely to suffer *significant harm* and thereby subject to *child protection* proceedings. Yet under Section 17 of the Act agencies have a broader responsibility to *safeguard* and promote the well-being of *children in need,* a group which includes but extends beyond those categorised as child protection cases. He argued that cases categorised as children in need, which included Victoria, had been in effect parked away from view. Consequently, the thorough investigation of such cases by all the appropriate agencies simply did not occur. Furthermore, he argued that the changing circumstances of, and risks to, the safety of children in need were not monitored effectively.

In seeking to address these shortcomings Lord Laming made 108 recommendations. The majority of these were directed towards the front-line procedural failings of SSDs, health services and police child protection teams identified in the investigation of Victoria's case. However, Lord Laming reserved his most damming criticisms for those further up the hierarchy of the public agencies involved:

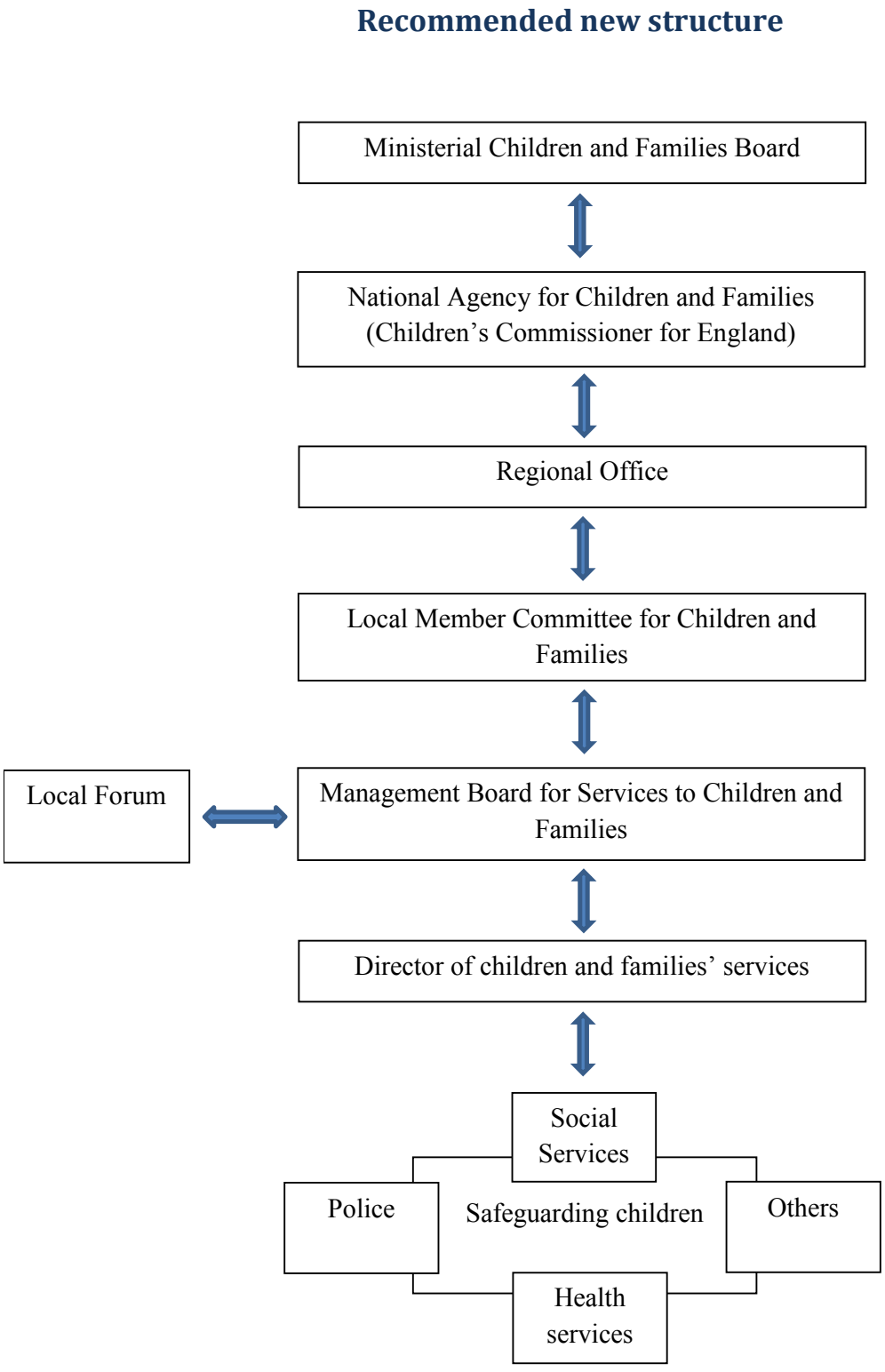
> The greatest failure rests with the managers and senior members of the authorities whose task it was to ensure that services for children, like Victoria, were properly financed, staffed, and able to deliver good quality support to children and families (Laming 2003: para 1.23).

Addressing this, and in seeking to fulfil the wider brief of the inquiry, the inquiry team invited representatives of agencies beyond north London and not connected to Victoria's case to contribute to a series of five seminars. The inquiry team found that many of the failings uncovered in Victoria's case were familiar to seminar participants (para 17.79). On this basis, and with the input of the seminar participants, Lord Laming developed 17 recommendations which aimed at or supported structural reform across England. Presenting his case for structural reform Lord Laming stated:

> I strongly believe that in future, those who occupy senior positions in the public sector must be required to account for any failure to protect vulnerable children from deliberate harm or exploitation. The single most important change in the future must be the drawing a clear line of accountability, from top to bottom, without doubt or ambiguity about who is responsible at every level for the well-being of vulnerable children (Laming 2003: para 1.27).

The recommended structure included in the inquiry report is shown below.

Figure 2: Laming (2003: 370)



It must be reiterated that the inquiry did not question the broad objectives embodied in the Children Act 1989. Lord Laming deemed structural reform necessary in order to address the failure of national and local agencies to work together to properly address the duties placed upon them under Section 17 of the Act. The structure chart situates child *safeguarding* as the overriding priority, thereby emphasising the wider responsibility of public agencies towards supporting the *children in need* population, not just those categorised as *child protection* cases under Section 47. In contrast, it will become clear in the next section that the ECM Green Paper introduced structural reforms which sought to address a broader set of policy priorities. Alongside safeguarding, the ECM five outcomes framework also reflected health, education, crime and anti-social behaviour and employability policy agendas. Furthermore, ECM was driven by the Treasury's focus on the needs of an estimated four million children growing up in poverty, not just the relatively small population defined as children in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, estimated as between three and four hundred thousand (DoH 2000: 13).

Two other points need to be emphasised here. Firstly, Lord Laming's clear intention was to achieve a higher prioritisation of child safeguarding policy in central government. In his view responsibility for child safeguarding was spread across too many separate departments, and within these departments the issue was never deemed to be a high enough priority. To address this Laming recommended the creation of a new National Agency for Children and Families. He recommended that the Agency report directly into an inter-departmental board comprised of ministers from relevant departments and chaired by a member of the Cabinet. Laming also recommended that the agency incorporate the position of Children's Commissioner. The argument for creating this position was that he/she could report directly to Parliament on a wide-range of issues affecting children. Advocates for the Children's Commissioner post argued that this would raise the political profile of children's policy generally, and thus challenge departmental policy-makers to reassess policy priorities. However, the Government rejected Laming's proposed agency. Instead it created a new inter-departmental directorate within the DfES, which was given a broad range of responsibilities that included but stretched well beyond child safeguarding. The post of Children's Commissioner was set up separately, but reported to the Secretary of State for Education. Thus, it too was not afforded the independent status Laming had recommended. The circumstances surrounding the Government's response to these recommendations are considered in the next section of this chapter.

Secondly, Laming's proposals for structural reform at the local level, including the appointment of Directors of Children and Families' Services, aimed to achieve greater prioritisation of child safeguarding across public and voluntary sector agencies. Importantly, the central role afforded to SSDs under the Children Act 1989 was not questioned. Structural reform here was designed to ensure that SSDs received adequate political and managerial support both within local authorities and from partner agencies. In contrast, it will be argued below that within ECM the creation of the DCS role was designed to support the Government's broader range of policy priorities, not just safeguarding. Furthermore, the creation of the new CSDs under ECM resulted in a significant change in the form and functions of SSDs.

The Government's Official Response

When the Victoria Climbié Inquiry was published in January 2003, the Government set out its initial response in a statement to the House of Commons. The Secretary of State for Health, Alan Milburn, outlined the immediate steps taken or planned in response to the inquiry's findings and Lord Laming's recommendations. These steps included: increased monitoring of those agencies implicated in Victoria's case; making child protection a higher priority in the national policing plan; the introduction of a new three year social work degree; new shared national standards for health and social services for the care of children; a commitment to revise official child protection procedural guidance; the issuing of a checklist based on Lord Laming's findings to police forces, health authorities and SSDs; and a commitment to establish a new programme of joint inspections to monitor joint working across agencies. Unsurprisingly, given a political commitment to reform even before the inquiry had begun, Milburn also accepted Lord Laming's argument that a structural re-organisation of local agencies responsible for child safeguarding was needed. He stated that:

> Victoria needed services that worked together. The report says that, instead, there was confusion and conflict. Down the years, inquiry after inquiry has called for better communication and better co-ordination, but neither exhortation nor legislation has proven adequate. The only sure-fire way to break down the barriers between those services is to remove them altogether. Fundamental reform is needed to pool knowledge, skills and resources and to provide more seamless local services for children (Milburn: House of Commons 28th January 2003).

However, no definitive commitment was made with regard to the detail of structural reform at either a national or local level. Milburn did, however, announce the creation of a programme to pilot the first local 'children's trusts', inviting local health, social services and

education agencies to test out different ways in which to achieve better multi-agency co-ordination of services for children. He also promised that the Government would set out a clear statement of its plans for children's services reform in the "Children at Risk" Green Paper scheduled for the spring. Tying this clearly to the inquiry Milburn stated that:

> We will of course consider in the Green Paper Lord Laming's recommendations for further structural changes… We cannot undo the wrongs done to Victoria Climbié. We can, though, seek to put right for others what so fundamentally failed for her. That is what Lord Laming's report demands, and that is what the Government is determined to do (Milburn: House of Commons 28th January 2003).

The Green paper was eventually published in September 2003 by which time it had become the "Every Child Matters" Green Paper (HM Government 2003a). In his foreword Blair sticks to the narrative presented by Milburn, framing the reform proposals as a direct response to Lord Laming's inquiry. He states:

> Responding to the inquiry headed by Lord Laming into Victoria's death, we are proposing here a range of measures to reform and improve children's care – crucially, for the first time ever requiring local authorities to bring together in one place under one person services for children, and at the same time suggesting real changes in the way those we ask to do this work carry out tasks on our and our children's behalf (HM Government 2003a: Blair Foreword).

The Green Paper proposed the merger of local authority education and children's social services departments to form new CSDs. It was also proposed that CSDs would be led by the new position of DCS supported by a Lead Member for Children's Services. The DCS role would report directly to the local authority chief executive and the Lead Member would sit on the Council's Cabinet or Executive Committee. In addition to holding responsibility for local authority education and children's social services, it was proposed that the DCS would also take a lead in developing the wider integration of local area children's services. The structural reforms proposed were seen as a first step towards the creation of children's trusts incorporating local area health and voluntary sector services for children, within a single organisation alongside local authority education and children's social services.

Prior to the publication of the Green Paper, in July 2003 the Government established the new Children and Young People's (CYP) Directorate within the DfES, headed up by the new post of Children's Minister. The Directorate was set up to lead the development of the Green Paper proposals. It replaced the much smaller inter-departmental CYPU, previously responsible for the development of inter-departmental children's policy. Significant resources and responsibilities were reallocated to the new DfES Directorate from other departments.

Most notably, this restructuring saw DoH relinquish policy-making resources and responsibility for children's social services. The creation of the Directorate in DfES represented a clear rejection of Lord Laming's proposal for a new National Agency for Children and Families sitting outside of departmental structures. The rationale for the new Directorate and the proposals for local restructuring are considered in the next two sections of this chapter. The implications for child safeguarding policy are also discussed.

ECM AND PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSALISM

The Origins of the ECM Green Paper

It was argued in the previous chapter that, by the end of Labour's first term, frustration at the slow pace of policy delivery had fuelled discussion within the party about the need for public sector structural reform. Furthermore, the Home Office Minister Paul Boateng had then begun to develop a case for the restructuring of local children's services centred on the Treasury principle of progressive universal public services. Significantly, Boateng was selected to lead the development of the ECM Green Paper beginning in September 2002. He was by now in the post of Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Boateng was well positioned to lead the Green Paper process given his close involvement in this policy area in his previous posts at DoH and the Home Office. It was noted in the previous chapter that whilst at the Home Office Boateng had been selected to chair the SEU's review of young people's policy (SEU 2000). This resulted in the creation of the Children's Fund and the establishment of the inter-departmental CYPU. The CYPU initially reported to Boateng in his Home Office post of Minister for Young People. The CYPU was responsible for setting up and managing the Children's Fund. Building on the approach of the Treasury's Sure Start programme which targeted pre-school children, the aim of the Children's Fund was to enhance and better integrate public services for children aged five to thirteen living in the most economically disadvantaged communities. Reflecting the principle of progressive universalism, both Sure Start and the Children's Fund placed a strong emphasis on the responsibility of mainstream services to better identify and address the challenges faced by the poorest children and the poorest communities. It was argued that a broad focus on the general well-being of children, particularly those growing up in poverty, would enable mainstream public services to intervene earlier to prevent the development of more acute

problems later on in childhood or adult life, and the need for more expensive specialist interventions at a later date.

However, drawing on lessons from the implementation of early Labour policy initiatives such as Sure Start, Boateng had argued that this approach required further steps to be taken in order to better integrate children's services policy-making at the national and local levels. In order to address the former, the remit of the CYPU was not only to administer the Children's Fund, but also to lead the development of a better integrated inter-departmental approach to children's policy. In November 2001, and now under the leadership of John Denham as Minister for Young People, the CYPU published the report *Building a Strategy for Children and Young People* (CYPU 2001). The report attempted to draw together all the various stands of children's policy across Whitehall in order to create a single inter-departmental framework of policy priorities. The CYPU played an important role in the subsequent Children at Risk Review, part of the 2002 Spending Review (HM Treasury 2002: 153-55). The 2002 Spending Review was led by Boateng, who had by now been promoted to the position of Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Thus, Boateng was well positioned to champion the CYPU policy framework and ensure a degree departmental compliance.

The report of the Review reiterated the Treasury's commitment to addressing the well-being of children growing up in poverty. It identified four 'outcomes' which it argued needed to provide the focus for early intervention. These were: educational achievement; employment; health; and anti-social behaviour. These made up four of what would later be referred to as the five ECM outcomes. Again, in tune with the principle of progressive universalism, the Review emphasised the greater contribution that mainstream services needed to play. It also repeated the argument Boateng had first made in 2000, that this approach required the closer integration of local children's services delivery. The Review stated:

> Mainstream services fail a significant minority of children and young people because they often focus on the majority and ignore specific needs. Services also focus on crisis and acute intervention rather than prevention and early identification of need. To address this, the Government has introduced targeted programmes, such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund, with discrete delivery arrangements outside mainstream public services. However, the review recommends the adoption of a common framework for integrating the lessons learned from successful programmes so that mainstream services are better able to respond to the full range of children and young people's needs (HM Treasury 2002: 154).

However, after the Review ministers, including Boateng, felt that insufficient progress had been made with regard to the integration of children's services policy at both the national and

local levels. Furthermore, the capacity of the CYPU to challenge departmental and local government interests, resistant to interference in their policy domains, was questioned. Although, this was ostensibly a Treasury led area of policy, Blair also recognised the potential need for structural reform at both the national and local levels in order to embed the party's commitment to tackling child poverty. Thus both Blair and Brown sanctioned the development of the ECM Green Paper beginning in September 2002, agreeing that Boateng should lead it. In an interview for this research, Boateng was clear that the origins of ECM lay not in any departmental agenda but in the party leadership's commitment to tackling child poverty:

> One of the great things that people misunderstand was that these two men [Blair and Brown] cared passionately about combatting poverty, they really did. They were absolutely genuine in that, and I was very glad to be working to deliver to an agenda that they could both sign up to. But that is never the agenda of the DfE or the DoH (interview with Paul Boateng).

Although the Victoria Climbié Inquiry was well underway by this point, having begun in September 2001, it is clear that the ECM Green Paper was not initiated in anticipation of Lord Laming's report. The focus on the role of mainstream services, and the prioritisation of educational achievement, employment, health and anti-social behaviour, meant that SSDs and child safeguarding were not (initially at least) directly relevant to the ECM Green Paper.

Child Safeguarding in ECM

The 'Stay Safe' Outcome

Prior to ECM responsibility for child safeguarding policy rested with DoH. As child safeguarding was not part of the original focus of the ECM Green Paper, DoH officials were not actively involved in the early development of its reform proposals. It was seen as a separate strand of social policy with no direct implications for safeguarding policy, including the management of SSDs and the social work profession (interviews with DoH officials). However, the low priority attached to safeguarding policy, both nationally and locally, was the key message beginning to emerge from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry shortly before its publication in January 2003. This message was reiterated in a joint chief inspectors' report on child safeguarding published around the same time, in October 2002. Echoing Lord Laming's concerns, this report stated that:

> The priority given to safeguarding has not been reflected firmly, coherently or consistently enough in service planning and resource allocation nationally or locally across all agencies. Other priorities have competed for attention with action on safeguarding (DoH 2002: 3).

Thus, by the time Lord Laming published his report, it was clear that any major changes affecting the development and delivery of children's policy needed to address the issue of child safeguarding. Consequently, the focus of the ECM Green Paper was widened in order to incorporate the issue of child safeguarding. The most obvious consequence of this was the addition of a fifth priority outcome to the four identified in the Children at Risk Review. 'Stay safe' was added alongside the original four outcomes (although these were phrased slightly differently in the Green Paper). Thus, the five ECM outcomes were:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The key reform proposed in the Green Paper, to specifically address the issue of child safeguarding, was the creation of multi-agency Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs). The legal requirement for all local authority areas to establish LSCBs, and regulations surrounding their functions, were subsequently set out under sections 13-16 of the Children Act 2004. LSCBs replaced highly criticised and poorly regulated Area Child Protection Committees. The Act made clear the legal obligation of all local children's services agencies to co-operate in individual safeguarding cases and made them accountable to the LSCB. More broadly Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 introduced a statutory 'duty to co-operate' to improve children's well-being for local agencies working with children. Significantly, schools were exempt from this duty. The reasons for this are considered in the final section of this chapter.

Safeguarding and Universal Services

Aside from the specific measures discussed above, the ECM Green Paper focused predominantly on the role of universal (mainstream) services in addressing needs of children. Safeguarding was effectively shoe-horned into the progressive universal framework. What was most striking about the reform proposals, was the lack of attention directed towards the role of SSDs and the social work profession, both of which which were at the very heart of

Lord Laming's proposals. Notwithstanding this, the official narrative sought to convey the impression that the Government's reform proposals flowed directly from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. The quote below taken from the Green Paper illustrates this point.

> As Lord Laming's recommendations made clear, child protection cannot be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. We need to focus both on the universal services which every child uses, and on more targeted services for those with additional needs… We need to ensure we properly protect children at risk within a framework of universal services which support every child to develop their full potential (HM Government 2003a: 5).

This quote seeks to connect the progressive universal framework to a general and relatively trivial observation made by Lord Laming, while ignoring his explicit call for a greater focus on child safeguarding and the specialist agencies involved. Significantly, the Government rejected his proposal for a National Agency for Children and Families. Lord Laming indicated to the House of Commons Health Committee that the creation of the Agency was the most important of all of his recommendations (House of Commons Health Committee 2003: 25). However, the Agency, which would have sat outside of departmental structures, found no support amongst government ministers or officials and was therefore never a real prospect (interview with Paul Boateng). Officially, the Government presented the establishment of the new CYP Directorate within the DfES as its response to the Agency recommendation (HM Government 2003b: 28). However, this did not adequately address Lord Laming's concern that safeguarding policy was eclipsed by health policy in the DoH. The new Directorate did not have the independent status he envisaged for the Agency. The shift of responsibility for safeguarding policy from DoH to DfES merely created the risk that it would be eclipsed by education rather than health policy. Indeed, these concerns were well placed, as the discussion in the next section and next chapter confirm.

However, initially it was the universal focus of ECM which detracted most from child safeguarding policy. The new Directorate was established in July 2003 prior to the publication of the Green Paper in 2003. Margaret Hodge was appointed as the first Children's Minister, taking on responsibility for the Directorate. In a speech to the Local Government Association (LGA) shortly after her appointment, Hodge provided a strong indication of the new Directorate's and the forthcoming Green Paper's approach to children's policy:

> We are constructing an entitlement for all our children and young people, a universal entitlement, into which we shall place the essential targeted support that some children will need, support because they are at risk in their home, because they have a special need or disability, because they are truanting or disengaged from education

> and training or – when they are older – work, because they have developed anti-social patterns of behaviour, be it bullying or creating disruption and chaos on the estates or the communities in which they reside, or because they have offended and broken the law. Providing these targeted services within a universal context is in my view the best way of minimizing the need for targeted intervention and support (Hodge 2003).

Chapter four of the Green Paper reflected this broad ambition. It emphasised the contribution of universal services to supporting the general child population in achieving the five ECM outcomes. Taken forward into the Children Act 2004, this framework superseded the emphasis placed on the role of SSDs to "safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable children" under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (DoH 2000: 4). The chapter also outlined new bureaucratic processes to underpin multi-agency working and the extended role of universal services. This included plans for better information sharing between agencies, a Common Assessment Framework for the assessment of individual children's needs and the appointment of a lead professional in individual cases. Critically, the co-ordinating role already afforded to SSDs and the social work profession under Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and the Children Act 1989 was overlooked. Even in guidance specifically aimed at social services staff, published to accompany the Act, the emphasis remained on strengthening the role of universal services. This guidance made no reference to any plans to address the resourcing and management of SSDs which had been central concerns of Lord Laming. Rather the report simply stated that; "Social workers and social care workers working with other agencies will have an important role in supporting universal services in meeting a wider range of needs" (DfES 2004: 4).

This neglect of social work in ECM, and its consequences, was accepted by a number of people involved in the formulation of the Green Paper interviewed for this research. For instance, Charles Clarke, the first Secretary of State with responsibility for implementation of ECM acknowledged:

> Where I think we failed is in terms of child safeguarding/child protection. We didn't have a targeted enough approach for that relatively small number of children, for whom that was an issue, and I think that was a failure (interview with Charles Clarke).

A local authority director, closely involved in national policy-making during this period, observed that government policy-makers were reluctant to immerse themselves in reforming social work even in the aftermath of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry:

> When ECM came in, now I think there was an idea that we'll get all this early intervention going, Sure Start and Children's Fund, and actually we won't need all

> this nasty child protection stuff, and of course it didn't happen. I think there was a kind of mind-set about, they didn't really like some of this social work stuff (interview with local authority DCS).

Similarly, a DfES official noted:

> If I have a *mea culpa* and critique of ECM, it is that it did not, for whatever reason, we can debate that, drive sufficiently on the nuts and bolts reform of children's social work… For one reason or another it is a very hard thing to do. It's in the last three or four years that we have begun to tackle some of that. Which is a shame, because it is not as if those two things, that broader systemic approach of ECM and the rigorous reform of children's social work are necessarily in contradiction with each other, but one was given, initially at least, more attention than the other (interview with DfES official).

Children's Services Departments (CSDs) and Children's Trusts

Arguably the most controversial proposal included in the ECM Green Paper was the reorganisation of local government management structures. This was deemed necessary to support the delivery of the new national policy framework described above. It was proposed that local authority education and children's social services departments would be merged, mirroring the structural reforms which had taken place at the national level. This merger would form the basis of new CSDs in every local authority led by a DCS. Furthermore, it was clear that the creation of CSDs was viewed as a first step towards the creation of multi-agency children's trusts operating outside of formal local authority control at later date. The opposition this generated amongst representatives of local government and the wider children's sector is discussed in final section of this chapter. For the moment, the important point is that opposition to the reform proposals did not deter the Government. The new structures became law under the Children Act 2004.

To understand the development of structural reform it is vital to appreciate the underlying party political dynamics. It was clear that, by the end of Labour's first term, the party leadership and senior ministers were committed to the structural reform of welfare services, including children's services. This stemmed from a frustration with the apparent slow pace of policy delivery, and particularly the perceived ineffectiveness of loosely regulated multi-agency service delivery 'partnerships'. Blair emphasised the need for greater diversity in the provision of welfare services. Based on the principle of 'what works' he envisaged a greater role for agencies outside of the public sector. Accordingly, the concept of independent 'care trusts', responsible for the commissioning of community health and social care services from a range of providers, first appeared in the NHS Plan (DoH 2000). At this time, this in

principle incorporated the commissioning of services to support the safeguarding of children. In a speech to the Annual Social Services Conference in October 2002, the Secretary of State for Health Alan Milburn underlined his commitment to reform and the vision he shared with Blair:

> Government, central or local, no longer needs to provide every public service. Gone are the days when Whitehall or indeed the town hall always knew best. What counts today is the quality of the service, not the origin of the provider. And today the sheer complexity of the social problems facing us calls for services that are less homogenous and more specialist. The job of providing services to children in need is a very different job from services to the elderly person. The one size fits all approach embodied in the traditional social services department may have been OK in the 1970s, but as more and more councils are recognising, it does not belong today (Milburn: 16th October 2002).

However, in response to the concerns emerging from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry during 2002, DoH proposed the creation of independent 'children's trusts', separate from the care trusts outlined in the NHS Plan (Birrell 2006). It was noted above that, in his speech to the House of Commons on the day the Victoria Climbié Inquiry was published in January 2003, Milburn used the inquiry to reaffirm the argument that structural reform was needed. He also used this speech to invite "health and social services and other local services such as education, to become the first-generation children's trusts" (Milburn: House of Commons - 28th January 2003). That the invitation was specifically directed towards health and social services was significant. The DoH vision for children's trusts was developed within the framework provided by the Children Act 1989, and therefore focused on the needs of a relatively small number of children categorised as 'children in need' by SSDs. The DoH vision for children's trusts was directed towards the better integration of services targeted at this group of children.

In issuing guidance to the pilots, the DoH left it up to local areas to determine which services would be incorporated into children's trusts and which groups of children would be served. Twenty pilots attempted the integration of all local children's services, whilst fifteen focussed on the integration of a relatively small number of specialist services for small sub-groups of the child population (UEA 2004). The different approaches taken reflected a tension in national children's policy. The approach taken by the former group of authorities was consistent with the progressive universal framework which had underpinned policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. The approach of the latter group was more consistent with the responsibilities set out in the Children Act 1989, and which continued to

provide the legal framework for DoH policy-makers, as well as for Lord Laming's recommendations. However, through the ECM Green Paper process, and following the transfer of responsibility for children's social services from DoH to DfES, the progressive universal framework achieved greater prominence nationally and locally.

In the ECM Green Paper, the vision presented for children's trusts is more prescriptive than in the guidance issued by DoH to the pilots. Here, children's trusts were positioned as a delivery mechanism for the ECM five outcomes framework. This framework shifted the focus away from the population of children in need defined under the Children Act 1989, and towards the wider population of children growing up in poverty. The Government's intention to legislate, to create CSDs as a first step towards children's trusts, is also clear (HM Government 2003a: chapter 5). Only five months into the pilot programme, and long before any findings would be available, it was clear that children's trusts would be rolled out nationally, and that their primary focus would be on the integration of universal services.

Thus the proposals for reform at the local level were clearly shaped by the Treasury's progressive universal framework and not any policy response specifically to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. In contrast, working within the legal and policy framework of the Children Act 1989, Lord Laming continued to view SSDs as pivotal to multi-agency working to safeguard children. His proposals for structural reform sought to enhance this role, not diminish it. Laming's argument was that senior local authority officers and councillors needed to be held more clearly accountable for their role in relation to child safeguarding through the resourcing and oversight of SSDs and other local agencies. Yet this was not consistent with the broader set of policy priorities set out under the ECM five outcomes framework, nor the proposal to establish children's trusts outside of local government structures. However, the official presentation of these proposals drew heavily on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry for its justification even though the ECM framework did not explicitly prioritise safeguarding policy, or adequately address Lord Laming's concerns. The quote below taken from an interview with a Treasury official involved in the ECM reform process supports this argument:

> What drove us was a view that there wasn't enough of a connection between the universal services and targeted services and that what we needed to do was create the conditions where the universal services, that's both health and schools, played far more of a part in terms of the children's services agenda … So the narrative that this all had to do with Laming, with Victoria Climbié, is just a narrative. Government always needs a platform to be able to argue it needs change, and tragically it very often uses a platform of poor services (interview with Treasury official).

DEPARTMENTAL AND POLICY NETWORK INFLUENCE OVER ECM

The main line of argument developed so far in this chapter has been that the structural reforms proposed under the ECM Green Paper, and taken forward through the Children Act 2004, reflected ministerial priorities more so than the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (Laming 2003). In other words, the independent expertise of Lord Laming does not appear to have had a significant bearing on the development of children's services reform. However, to support this argument it is also necessary to reflect upon the role played by departmental interests and non-governmental policy networks in relation to the Green Paper.

ECM and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

The Treasury's progressive universal framework promoted the need for the closer integration of policy-making for children's services at both the national and local levels. At the national level this raised the difficult issues of inter-departmental coordination. Principally, three separate departments led on different aspects of children's policy at this time (Home Office, DoH and DfES). Boateng had first called for the development of an inter-departmental approach to children's policy in the report of PAT 12 (SEU 2000). This led to the creation of the inter-departmental Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU). However, following the Children at Risk Review, which reported in July 2002 (HM Treasury 2002: 153-55), the effectiveness of the CYPU was questioned by ministers, including Boateng. Responding to this Blair and Brown agreed that Boateng should consider options for a more radical restructuring of central government structures for the development of children's policy. This was part of the remit for the ECM Green Paper which got underway in September 2002.

Early on in the development of the ECM Green Paper, Boateng called for the creation of a new Whitehall department to lead on children's policy. It was his ambition to lead such a department. Although the precise remit of the new department would need to be negotiated, it was clear that this would require the reallocation of significant resources from existing departments. Having only been appointed to the post of Secretary of State for Education in October 2002, Charles Clarke fought hard to defend the resources of his new department. Siding with his new Secretary of State, Blair decided against the creation of new department and instead opted for the creation of a new CYP Directorate within DfES (interview with Paul Boateng).

Boateng's opposition to DfES control over ECM implementation was based on his view that the broad focus on the well-being of children, which was at the heart of the progressive universal framework, would be eclipsed in a department primarily focused on education policy. He explained:

> Schools have always been the main obstacle to progress in this area, because so long as children remain in the same departments as schools they will always lose out to schools, because that's where the political pressure is, that's where the resources are, inevitably follow, and it's also where the strongest professional vested interests are (interview with Paul Boateng).

Interestingly, Clarke's opposition to Boateng's proposal was rooted more in his career ambition rather than any fundamental disagreement with regard to the content of ECM. Clarke had only been recently appointed as Secretary of State for Education and was reluctant to relinquish responsibility for any specific area of policy that had come with his new post. However, he was generally regarded as a strong supporter of the ECM agenda (interviews with DfES officials). Ministers saw the resistance of departmental officials tied to the education reform agenda as one of the main obstacles to the delivery of ECM: In an interview for this research Clarke stated:

> I think the culture in the DfES was about schools' standards almost entirely, not about the wider agenda. I don't think that was ever the agenda of the ministers. I don't think that was an agenda for David Blunkett when he was SoS or for Estelle Morris or for me. I think we all saw the wider agenda. That may have been a dislocate, but they saw, the officials, saw the school standards agenda as absolutely pre-eminent (interview with Charles Clarke).

Ministers recognised the need to try and knit the two policy agendas together, even in the face of opposition from officials. They recognised that whilst the progressive universal framework and the ECM reforms were primarily driven by the Treasury, they also continued to receive the formal backing of Blair as well as Brown at this stage.

However, it was ultimately Blair's commitment to a particular agenda for schools' reform that bolstered the position of education interests within DfES and constrained the ECM reform process, as Boateng had feared. Firstly, Blair continued to support a relentless focus on school standards, measured through pupils' performance in statutory tests. This was one of the key areas of policy which the PMDU had been asked to focus on (Barber 2007: 50). In contrast ECM called for universal services, including schools, to address a broader range issues relating to the general well-being of children. Secondly, Blair was now committed to the extension of market governance mechanisms in education. He argued that greater choice

for parents and competition between individual schools was needed in order to spur innovation and drive up standards. Significantly, this required greater freedom for individual schools from local authority control. In contrast ECM promoted the closer integration of local children's services, including schools, and accountability to CSDs and eventually children's trusts. Blair did support the Treasury's commitment to tackling child poverty and the general well-being of children, but only in so far as it did not impinge upon his agenda for schools' reform.

It was within this context, that education interests were able to resist the full implications of the Treasury's progressive universal approach. One DCS interviewed for this research explained that:

> Headteachers and the education community generally felt very resistant because they didn't want their position diluted and they didn't want to be held accountable for the children, they just wanted to be held accountable for their education outcomes (interview with local authority DCS).

The most notable formal concession to education interests was the exemption granted to schools from the 'duty to co-operate' under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004. Also significant was the decision taken by the great majority of local authorities to appoint an education professional to the new post of DCS (Frost and Parton 2009: 163). Reflecting the continued importance of schools' reform to Blair and the DfES, local authority leaders continued to prioritise this area of policy ahead of ECM (interviews with local DCSs).

It is important to stress that Blair did not oppose the broad ambition of ECM. It was primarily the service delivery arrangements envisaged that surfaced as a point of tension, and which was not resolved in the ECM Green Paper or the Children Act 2004. Whilst Blair promoted greater school autonomy and competition, ECM sought to formalise structures for inter-agency co-operation and the accountability of schools to CSDs and children's trusts. In an interview for this research, Clarke suggested that these competing visions for public service reform lay at the heart of disagreements between No10 and the Treasury:

> Gordon basically believed in a Fabian-Webbite model based on saying that if you make the changes at the centre and you move the levers and so on you can deliver a change in Hartlepool. Tony was much more in favour of the social entrepreneurship model which was essentially if you were freeing up schools, freeing up GPs or whatever, to move more effectively then that was the more effective way to get change. The Brownite argument against Tony was that it was not equitable because you couldn't, if you gave schools freedom and hospitals freedoms, inequality would grow as a result of that. The argument of Tony against the central system was that it

> didn't work and it demotivated local leadership. What you needed was local leadership to address the issues (interview with Charles Clarke).

The Government's failure to spell out clearly how children's trusts would operate and how local public services, such as schools, would relate to them reflected this unresolved tension. Significantly, the Brown Government removed the exemption of schools from the duty to co-operate and also sought to create a firmer statutory basis for children's trusts (DCSF 2009). Thus the fundamental policy tension was essentially around an ideological difference within the party over service delivery methods and not departmental resistance to reforming ministers. This provided the primary constraint to ECM and the establishment of children's trusts in particular.

The Role of the Children's Inter-Agency Group (CIAG)

CIAG brought together a comprehensive range of policy actors in the children's sector from outside government. Its membership included the chief executives of the major children's charities as well as public sector leaders representing the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), the Confederation of Education Directors and the NHS Confederation. Initially the group was established as a defensive coalition ahead of the publication of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry report. It was clear by this time that the inquiry would be critical of a range of agencies from both the public and charity sectors. The initial objective of CIAG was to present a unified response on behalf of the sector and prevent agencies blaming each other as had happened in the wake of previous inquiries. Significantly the then chief executive of the NSPCC, Mary Marsh, agreed to this strategy. In the past the NSPCC had not always stood alongside the rest of the children's sector and had positioned itself as a critical voice (interviews).

Having successfully achieved its initial objective, representatives of CIAG, Paul Ennals (the chief executive of NCB) in particular, became actively engaged in the development of the ECM Green Paper. Government policy-makers saw the Group as a convenient mechanism through which to consult with the sector. That it was fronted by representatives of the charity sector such as Ennals was significant. It was argued in the previous chapter that the Treasury had established a positive relationship with the major children's charities during the first term of the Labour Government. They had been largely supportive of the child poverty strategy and had contributed to the development of early policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. The NCB in particular had helped the Government to articulate its broad ambitions and was pivotal in the development of the principles of early intervention and an

extended role for mainstream services. Fronted by representatives of the major children's charities, including Ennals, it was therefore unsurprising that the Group was supportive of the broad ambition for ECM. This is evident in the Group's publication *Serving Children Well: A New Vision for Children's Services* (LGA et al 2002).

Prompted by the ADSS (interviews), CIAG did however oppose the idea of structural reform and argued that the Government's ambitions could be achieved through existing institutional arrangements. That the argument against structural reform was rejected provides clear evidence of the limited influence CIAG had with regard to the central proposal which emerged in the ECM Green Paper. On the other hand, the Group did manage to steer the Government away from the more radical proposals for structural reform that were discussed early on in the development of the Green Paper, such as nationalising child protection services (interview with charity leader and CIAG member). Furthermore, one interviewee recalled that early versions of the Green Paper adopted a hostile tone with regard to social services. The more passive tone adopted in the final version followed the advice of sector representatives (interview with DfES official).

However, these examples of CIAG influence are less significant than its support for the focus on universal services in ECM. Not only did this add legitimacy to the Government's purported response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, it also contributed to the lack of focus on SSDs and failed to address the perilous state of the children's social work profession. SSD directors interviewed for this research recognised that ministers' hostile attitudes towards SSDs and the social work profession had hardened following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. The ADSS saw engagement with the children's charities through CIAG as the only possible way to try and influence government policy. As one director explained:

> I suppose a lot of the role of the inter-agency group, and it developed this way right throughout this period, was to provide a vehicle through which more acceptable faces could engage with government than social services who were perceived at the time to be part of the problem (interview with local authority DCS).

Having said this, it can be argued that the ADSS primarily sought to defend the interests of SSD directors and not the social work profession more generally. In doing so it may even have inadvertently contributed to, or at least failed to address, the neglect of children's social work practice and the failure to prioritise safeguarding in ECM. The two quotes below support this argument. The first is taken from an interview with an active ADSS member at this time who went on to be a DCS. The second comes from an interview with Dame Moira

Gibb who was also an active ADSS member at this time, and who later went on to chair the Social Work Taskforce set up following the Baby P crisis in late 2008.

> Given the critique within Laming, it was a hard time to stand up for social work, and linked to that, for a separate reason, because we wanted to stay inside the room, it was really easy to see how well received the ECM construct was. Well it wasn't called that at that stage, but the integrated services, generic, universal approach, early intervention, how well received that was and how uncomfortable it would be constantly to say at the end of a discussion, oh by the way our social workers have got too high a caseload (interview with local authority DCS).
>
> Social workers can be difficult people. They are not easy to manage and I think there was a desire on behalf of directors to kind of distance themselves from what social work practice was. I remember having a conversation with a colleague of mine that we were building all of this on sand because we didn't have that competence and that capability at the frontline of practice (interview with Dame Moira Gibb).

The limited input of DoH officials, at least in the early stages of the ECM Green Paper process, also contributed to the lack of emphasis on social work in ECM. Furthermore, through CIAG ministers and their advisers engaged with those representatives of the children's sector whom they found most acceptable. No channel existed through which critics of the focus on universal services could be heard.

This research found no evidence to support Rhodes' (1997) claim that policy networks now exert significant influence over the development of policy. The Government ignored the arguments against structural reform presented by CIAG during the development of the Green Paper. Furthermore, it continued to ignore CIAG's protests, and those of the LGA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), after the proposals were officially presented for consultation when the Green Paper was published in September 2003. There was a clear political determination to implement structural reform. Children's sector interest groups, and other interest groups including the LGA and SOLACE, were therefore powerless to stop the passage of this key provision in the Children Act 2004.

Conclusion

In Labour's official narrative the Victoria Climbie Inquiry had a direct and profound influence on children's services policy. This conveyed the impression that ECM was closely informed by the evidence collated by Lord Laming regarding child safeguarding services and his recommendations for reform. As such, it gave the impression of evidence-based policy-making. It also appears to lend support to the theory that policy change follows a critical juncture, or window of opportunity, that opens up the policy process to new sources of

expertise. On the one hand, Lord Laming's inquiry did appear to make child safeguarding a higher priority for ministers and local children's services agencies. However, it has also been argued that ECM was primarily designed to advance the Treasury's progressive universal policy framework. Child safeguarding was shoe-horned into this framework, alongside existing priorities including health, education, crime and anti-social behaviour and employability. Furthermore, a number of Lord Laming's key concerns and recommendations were overlooked. Thus, it can be argued that the inquiry was used by ministers as a device to promote the Treasury framework whilst deflecting criticism of plans for the restructuring of local children's services. In this sense, careful analysis of this period of policy-making supports the argument that policy-makers search for evidence in order to progress pre-determined priorities.

This chapter has also provided strong evidence to support the hypothesis that minsters play a central role in driving policy change. It has been argued that Paul Boateng used the opportunity provided by the ECM Green Paper to push forward reform proposals he had been promoting for a number of years. Moreover, this did lead to significant change in Whitehall and at the local level. Under ECM a new directorate and a new ministerial post were established within DfES to promote a broader focus on the issue of child welfare. At the local level the Children Act 2004 mandated the merger of local government education and children's social services departments, and the creation of a new DCS post. Furthermore, the close connection between ECM and the Treasury's progressive universal framework supports the conclusion made in the previous chapter, that the priorities of party leaders do directly affect the development of policy.

It must be recognised that Boateng's reform proposals were watered down to a certain extent following the resistance of education interests in the DfES. This initially appears to support to the assumption, underlying the APM, that departments retain a pivotal role in the policy-making process. However, it has been argued that the resistance of education interests to Boateng's reform proposals relied on Blair's support for existing policy on schools. Thus, it was intra-party disagreements, not the power of departments, which constrained Boateng, and left the role of schools in relation to ECM unclear. This observation adds further support to the argument that ministers must take account of the policy positions of party leaders. Furthermore, the theory that policy networks drive policy-making has been further questioned. Although representatives of the children's charity sector continued to enjoy good access to ministers and civil servants in this period, this was on the condition that they

continue to support the principle of progressive universal children's services. Critically, minsters felt able to ignore the concerns of those who lobbied against the restructuring of local children's services. However, it remains necessary to examine the role played by policy networks in relation to the implementation of ECM. This is where Rhodes' claims policy networks are able to exert most influence.

6) ECM 'Delivery' under the Blair and Brown Governments (2005-2010)

To coincide with the passage of the Children Act 2004 the Government published the report; *ECM: Change for Children* (HM Government 2004). The report was issued by the new Children's Minister, Margaret Hodge, and conveyed the Government's plans for the delivery of the ECM reforms. The term delivery was one frequently used by the Labour. The Government's usage of the term followed the common conceptual separation of the policy formulation and policy implementation 'stages' of the policy process (Hill 2009; Parsons 1996). The term delivery is synonymous with the implementation stage of the policy process. Its usage typically suggests that questions relating to policy priorities and the design of policy instruments (policy formulation) have been settled. From Rhodes' perspective, it is in relation to policy implementation that central government policy-makers are particularly dependent upon local agencies, and thus policy networks are assumed to have the most influence. This chapter questions this perspective by examining the role played by ministers and departmental officials, and the continued relevance of wider party political pressures, during the post legislative phase of Labour's ECM reform programme.

The chapter is organised into two main sections. The first looks at ECM delivery between the passage of the Children Act 2004 and Blair's departure from office in June 2007. This includes a discussion of the relationship between the new directorate in the DfES and local government. In doing so, this section sheds further light on the questions of ministerial engagement in departmental policy-making and local service delivery arrangements, as well as the question of policy network influence. In addition, the continued relevance of competition between No 10 and the Treasury to the development of children's services policy is discussed. The second section on ECM delivery under the Brown Government picks up the story on ministerial engagement in policy-making, focusing on the actions taken by Brown's close political ally Ed Balls after his appointment as Secretary of State for Children School and Families. This includes a discussion of Balls' response to the case of Baby P in late 2008 and the new independent reviews of child protection and social work policy this triggered, and thus reconnects with the question of evidence-based policy-making. Furthermore, this section also considers the importance of inter-party political competition to the development of children's services policy, following Cameron's election as Conservative Party leader.

ECM DELIVERY UNDER THE BLAIR GOVERNMENT (2005-2007)

The ECM five outcomes framework reflected the Treasury's ambition to 'join-up' a wide range of issues around child well-being, and in particular the needs of children growing up in poverty. This became the responsibility of the new CYP Directorate in the DfES, after it was created in July 2003. Following the passage of the Children Act 2004, the principle challenge facing the Directorate was to ensure the successful restructuring of children's services at the local level. This section discusses at the approach taken by the Directorate and the constraints it faced whilst Blair remained in office.

The Children and Young People's Directorate

The Role of the Director of Children's Services (DCS)

A number of Labour ministers involved in the early development of social policy were deeply sceptical about the capacity of local government to deliver change (interviews). Consequently, during the early years of the Labour Government ministers sought to establish new mechanisms at the local level for the delivery of new social policy initiatives such as Sure Start. Multi-agency service delivery 'partnerships' provided the initial solution. These partnerships brought together a range of local agencies from across the public and charity sectors in order to co-ordinate the planning and commissioning of services. For example, in the case of Sure Start, service delivery partnerships had to be chaired by a representative of the charity sector. The ambition was to harness the knowledge and entrepreneurship of local charities whilst avoiding the capture of new resources by what many ministers saw as vested or 'producerist' interests in local government. However, it later became apparent that in most local areas only the local authorities commanded the strategic and bureaucratic capacity to support these partnerships and manage the additional resources, as well as ensure compliance with central government performance management criteria. As the party leadership and ministers became frustrated with the apparently slow pace of policy delivery towards the end of the first term, they looked to closer engagement with local government as the answer. It was within this context that proposals for the restructuring of local government to create CSDs under the leadership of a single DCS emerged.

The *ECM: Change for Children* programme (HM Government 2004) provided a detailed national framework within which the new local CSDs could be established and operate. The five ECM outcomes (with lists of performance indicators linked to each) provided the basis of a new performance and inspection framework. Furthermore, each CSD was required to

publish a plan setting out how it and other local partners would deliver against this framework. The justification provided for this level of prescription was that "local change programmes will be stronger if set within a supportive national framework" (HM Government 2004: 6). What was also notable was the programme's stress on the commitment and co-operation of the first generation of DCSs. It was argued that: "The transformation that we need can only be delivered through local leaders working together in strong partnership with local communities on a programme of change" (HM Government 2004: 2). Yet, of course, the new DCSs had inevitably been propelled into prominent positions within local authorities through ECM. For in most local authorities the DCS commanded the largest budgets, making them de facto deputy chief executives. Thus, there was a shared interest amongst minsters and the new DCS community in ensuring the successful implementation of the Change for Children programme and the preservation of the DCS role.

Ministers valued the advice and support of representatives of the new DCS community. Hodge seconded a number of representatives of this community into her new directorate to support the implementation of the Change for Children programme. When Hodge was replaced in May 2005, only a few months into the programme, the new Children's Minister Beverley Hughes formalised the relationship in a forum for discussions between her directorate and the DCS community. However, discussions between the Directorate and the DCS community, which from 2007 was represented by the newly created Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), remained focused on technical issues. Policy priorities were never open for discussion. In an interview for this research Hughes stated:

> I had regular meetings with them [DCSs], some individually, some together and at some point I started an inter-agency forum - very regular meetings with children's organisations around that table along with the ADCS. I had very close contact with the president of the ADCS... That was not so much about new policy, but about delivery, what's working, what's not working and problems that arise along the way (interview Beverley Hughes).

An ADCS member corroborated this statement, stressing that advice was closely tied to day-to-day implementation issues, rather than the principles behind the policy:

> We gave sensible advice; we didn't grandstand; we didn't put on t-shirts; we didn't lobby for money. We relentlessly tried to give sensible advice about our perspective from frontline services (interview with local authority DCS).

A former social services director interviewed for this research was more critical of the new community of DCSs. He questioned their lack of critical engagement with the DfES:

> What I felt at the time, and still do feel, was that children's services were a government franchise that local government was running…there was a sort of co-option of local government leadership. So the identity and loyalties I think of senior children' services professionals were quite ambivalent towards local government (interview with former director of social services).

In Rhodes' (1981; 1988) terminology, DCSs were valued for their informational and organisational resources. However, this did not give them the level of influence over children's policy predicted by the policy network model. DCSs were committed to the broad aims of ECM, recognising that they owed their status to the programme. In this sense, DCSs fitted Larson's (1977) definition of 'techno-bureaucrats' - professionals owing status to both their technical expertise and bureaucratic position, but lacking ideological autonomy. Exploiting this loyalty to ECM, the DCS role provided the means through which policy-makers in the CYP Directorate could seek to control children's policy-making within local government. This was in contrast with the greater autonomy and influence over policy which professionals based in local government enjoyed in the post-war period (Laffin 1986).

The Continued Neglect of the Social Work Profession

ECM was primarily aimed at extending the contribution of universal children's services to address a broad range of child well-being issues, despite the rhetorical connection to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (as was argued in the last chapter). This connection served to further the Treasury's progressive universal policy framework. In other words, child safeguarding, and the capacity of local authority SSDs and the social work profession to address this issue, were not at the heart of ECM. Consequently, a social work voice was absent from the development of the ECM reform proposals. Although SSD Directors had limited access to the Green Paper process via the CIAG, they were not in a strong position to speak up on behalf of the social work profession in general. Furthermore, their opposition to SSD restructuring was ignored. In the post-legislative phase of ECM, and in contrast to the new DCS community, the social work profession remained poorly represented within the policy-making circles. In fact, its input was diminished further following the central government restructuring which created the new directorate. Although DoH officials leading on safeguarding were transferred to the new DfES directorate, the input of social services inspectors was lost. The position of Chief Inspector for Social Services was abolished, as was the recently established Children's Social Care Inspectorate. Responsibility for the inspection of CSDs, including children's social services functions, was handed to the schools'

inspectorate Ofsted, providing a strong indication of the low value attached by ministers to social work expertise.

Responding to Laming's call for a higher prioritisation of safeguarding policy at the national and local level, the issue of safeguarding was incorporated within the progressive universal framework. Thus, ECM emphasised the role of universal services, not SSDs and the social work profession, in the early identification of safeguarding concerns. This was rationalised as the best means to prevent the problems affecting individual children escalating, thereby reducing the number of cases later referred for assessment by social services and leading to potentially costly specialist interventions. However, safeguarding was only one of the five ECM outcomes universal services were expected to consider. Under the Change for Children programme a new "tripartite system" for the identification and management of individual cases consisting of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), the Contact Point database and the Lead Professional were introduced (Garrett 2009: chapter 3). This system was designed to support universal services to identify and respond to a range of individual child needs, in accordance with the five outcomes framework. These arrangements superseded the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (DoH 2000), which, in the context of the Children Act 1989, prioritised the issue of child safeguarding and positioned SSDs as the lead agency in the assessment process, and with regard to the co-ordination of multi-agency packages of 'family support'. Under the Change for Children programme, social work was assigned a more peripheral role.

Paradoxically, safeguarding policy did occupy a considerable portion of ministerial and officials' time within the Directorate, in spite of its much broader remit. Periodic serious case reviews and inspection failures required careful responses (interviews with DfES officials and Beverley Hughes). However, safeguarding policy continued to be positioned within the wider progressive universal framework. Following the development of the new assessment and case management processes described above, one of the key policy developments in this period was the redrafting of the multi-agency safeguarding guidance called *Working Together* (HM Government 2006). Again, this document placed safeguarding within the broader ECM five outcomes framework and emphasised the contribution which needed to be made by all services. This replaced the 1999 version of Working Together which more narrowly emphasised the responsibilities of SSDs under the Children Act 1989 (Parton 2014: 95-97). Hughes acknowledged that this updated guidance was drafted without any significant input from the social work profession:

> I remember sweating blood over *Working Together*, over the detail line by line… I have to say, that whilst it went out for consultation, that particularly was a process that largely involved civil servants drafting and ministers approving (interview with Beverley Hughes).

A number of studies have charted the impact of the new processes introduced under ECM on front-line social work practice. In general, these studies argue that these processs significantly added to the bureaucratic burden on social workers, eroding professional autonomy and the time available for direct work with clients (Broadhurst et al 2010a; 2010b; Calder 2004; Garrett 2003; 2005; 2009; Jones 2001; Lees at al 2011; Munro 2004; 2005; Parton 2008; Peckover and Hall 2009; Wastell et al 2010; White et al 2009; 2010). However, it is important to note that whilst it may have intensified, the bureaucratisation of children's social work was a trend well underway before Labour took office (Dominelli 1996; Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996; Harris 1998; Parton 1998).

Interestingly, the Government's school education reform programme also relied heavily on bureaucratic mechanisms to drive performance improvement. Here, performance targets, league tables and inspection were the key levers. However, in contrast with children's social work, the Government recognised that in order to achieve its ambitions the teaching profession needed to be strengthened. Teachers, accordingly, received a new pay and rewards structure and extensive investment in training (DfEE 1998). The social work profession did not receive any comparable attention, even in the wake of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry published in 2003. The CYP Directorate, with the exception of the DCS community, did not invest in the development of any other groups within the vast children's workforce, including social work.

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was set up in 2005 to try and develop an overarching strategy for the development of the children's workforce, including social work. The CWDC operated at arms length from the Department and was chaired by the NCB Director Paul Ennals. Its remit covered a large number of occupations and professions including social work, although notably not teaching which continued to be served by its own separate body. However, different agencies represented on the CWDC were neither compelled or adequately incentivised to engage with each other to align their training and workforce development programmes. Without sufficient political and financial backing, the CWDC did not succeed in developing a properly integrated workforce strategy.

A separate attempt at workforce reform was the equally ill-fated *Options for Excellence* (DfES and DoH 2006) strategy. This strategy sought to tackle the reform of the social care workforce. However, the paper addressed the entire social care workforce across adults and children's social services (both professionally qualified and unqualified) and ultimately failed to grapple with the specific challenges facing the children's social work profession. As one senior DfES official interviewed for this research conceded, the Options for Excellence strategy "produced all sorts of wishy-washy definitions of what social work was about, and absolutely was not going to get at the reform of social work" (interview with DfES official). Reflecting on this issue Hughes also recognised that social work reform was not properly addressed in this period. In an interview for this research she stated:

> In terms of where we put the money, particularly around workforce development - [that] went into teachers and not social workers and that was a big gap. We just didn't have the money to be honest. That was a gap. Although Climbié-Laming-ECM was a very good framework, we didn't put the same emphasis into improving the quality of the workforce to deliver those things as we did in education (interview with Beverley Hughes).

In sharp contrast children's social work reform was later identified as a central theme in Conservative Party children's policy, as the discussion in the second section of this chapter illustrates.

The Shadow of the Treasury

Although the Change for Children programme was directed by the Children's Minister and officials in the CYP Directorate, it is important to recognise that Treasury officials maintained a close interest in the progress of ECM delivery. It was noted in the previous chapter that the new directorate was itself an outcome of the ECM reform process. It was created as an inter-departmental directorate responsible for the implementation of ECM. Significantly, the Change for Children programme included the signatures of sixteen ministers from across the Government. Moreover, the Directorate pulled in resources from various departments, as well as the new inter-departmental units which had been set up to administer early Treasury policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. Thus, it included officials from a range of policy backgrounds, including a significant number seconded from outside of the civil service. Although hosted by the DfES, the Directorate provided a new foothold for the Treasury within Whitehall, as it sought to 'join-up' policy-making for children's services in accordance with its progressive universal framework and commitment to tackling child poverty. Although it was policy-makers within the Directorate,

supported by the new DCS community, who led the 'every-day' process of developing the detail of ECM implementation, they had to remain mindful of the Treasury's interest in this policy area.

The Treasury emphasised its ongoing commitment to tackling child poverty and the principle of progressive universal children's services in the run up to the 2006 budget and the 2007 CSR (HM Treasury/DfES 2005; HM Treasury/DfES 2007). Outside these formal policy review forums Treasury officials maintained close informal contact with ministers and senior officials in the new directorate. The Treasury's Head of Public Services, Ray Shostak, in particular was a frequent visitor to the DfES (interviews with DfES officials). Shostak had closely advised Paul Boateng on the development of ECM, having himself led the integration of children's services in Hertfordshire well ahead of the statutory requirement to do so. Beverley Hughes, Children's Minister between May 2005 and June 2009, acknowledged the importance of the Treasury's principle of the progressive universalism to the work of her directorate:

> Well, we had this terrible phrase 'progressive universalism', which largely came from Treasury. Apart from nobody else understanding what it means, it does capture what we were about. …in the context of universal services, underneath that universal umbrella, we wanted and expected the public services, the agencies, to identify, target and deliver more to disadvantaged children, because closing the gap, reducing child poverty and closing all kinds of gaps between disadvantaged children and the rest was a really top priority (interview with Beverley Hughes).

Constraints to ECM Delivery

Blair and School Reform

Under ECM the central objective of the new directorate was to broaden the remit of universal public services to support the specific needs of children growing up in poverty. Clearly schools are the primary universal provider of public services to children and their families. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, ECM implicitly challenged the focus on school standards and the commitment to greater school autonomy in Labour education policy, which had been assiduously overseen by Blair and his close advisers in No10. Blair had not accepted Paul Boateng's recommendation to create a new children's department in Whitehall, which could potentially have put pressure on DfES resources committed to supporting the drive to raise school standards. The decision to create a new directorate within the DfES to lead on ECM served to protect the school standards agenda. As the first Secretary of State with responsibility for ECM delivery, Charles Clarke was supportive of the new directorate.

Nonetheless the Directorate was initially seen as separate from the rest of the Department. Given the political support of the PM, the school standards agenda remained paramount and the bulk of departmental resources remained focused there (interviews with DfES officials).

Furthermore, not longer after the Change for Children programme had been launched, Blair replaced Clarke with Ruth Kelly. Kelly focused mainly on schools' reform, largely overlooking the work of the CYP Directorate (interviews). A few months after Kelly's appointment, Beverly Hughes replaced Hodge as Children's Minister. In an interview for this research Hughes recalled the situation within the Department when she arrived:

> When I came in in 2005 there was a real problem in getting the Schools Division[2] in the Department to see themselves as part of this agenda and the children and families agenda was just seen, I think, as a problem over there, not what the Department was really about (interview with Beverley Hughes).

That Kelly devoted her attention to the Department's more established policy agenda has to be seen in the context of Blair's final push on education reform. In the 2005 White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools* (HM Government 2005a) radical proposals to reform the governance of state education were set out. Based on the assumption that parental choice and competition between schools would raise educational standards, one of the central aims was to free schools from local authority control. Thus, it was proposed that the freedoms previously available only to Academies and Foundation schools would become available to all schools. Alongside similar reforms in health, these proposals exposed deep divisions within the Labour Party regarding the strategy for public service reform (Shaw 2007: chapter 3). This slowed the progress of ECM.

Arguably the focus on school standards and the broader welfare orientation of ECM were not incommensurate. Raising educational achievement was seen as vital to improving the life chances of disadvantaged children. However, Blair's commitment to competition and choice as the primary mechanism for governing education (and the public services more widely) was in tension with the continued emphasis on central co-ordination promoted by Brown. ECM embodied the Brown perspective on public service governance. It strove for greater integration and co-ordination not competition across children's services agencies including schools. Towards this end the new Directorate sought to establish the authority of local CSDs over all local children's services agencies. As noted in the previous chapter, ministers and their advisers saw this as the first step towards the creation of multi-agency children's

[2] The Schools Division was comprised of separate directorates primarily focused on the school standards agenda. It controlled the large majority of departmental resources.

trusts outside the existing local government structures. The direction of this policy pointed towards schools being held to account for a much broader range of children's outcomes. Yet the separation of schools from local authority control under Blair's proposals pulled in the opposite direction. Thus the tensions between the new Directorate and the Schools' Division in the DfES reflected the disagreements within the Labour leadership over the party's public service reform strategy. While Blair remained in office plans to develop the role of CSDs and children's trusts remained highly politically and bureaucratically contested within government.

Blair and Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

The other point of tension between the ECM approach to children's services and No10, which policy-makers in the new Directorate had to manage, related to services for young people. Applying the principle of progressive universalism, ECM included a commitment to improve the range of positive activities available to young people beyond formal education. The rationale was that this was necessary to help prevent poor outcomes such as drug taking, teenage pregnancy and involvement in crime and antis-social behaviour. However, Blair continued to promote the more authoritarian populist perspective discussed in chapter four, a response to public concerns over crime and anti-social behaviour. This was exemplified in relation to 'ASBO politics' which prioritised perceptions of safety amongst the local community, ahead of the welfare of individual young people (Squires 2008).

Just over a year into the implementation of ECM Blair launched the *Respect Action Plan* (Home Office 2006). In his foreword Blair counter-poses the emphasis on prevention and the contribution of universal public services, which underpinned ECM, with the authoritarian populist stance which drove ASBO politics.

> There have been many improvements in local areas – to public services and to physical environments – and we will continue to build strong communities by providing opportunities for all through Sure Start, by tackling child poverty, through tax credits for hard-working families as well as through enhanced youth and sport provision for young people. But there are still intractable problems with the behaviour of some individuals and families, behaviour which can make life a misery for others, particularly in the most disadvantaged communities (Home Office 2006: Blair Foreword).

The Respect Action Plan restates the Government's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and introduces new measures targeted at 'problem families'. It promised new legislation to tackle poor behaviour in schools, extended use of parenting contracts and new

schemes backed by the threat of benefits sanctions to address 'problem families'. To lead on the implementation Blair appointed Louise Casey to lead the newly created Respect Unit based in the Home Office. Casey had previously been appointed by Blair to lead the drive on ASBOs following the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

It was within this context that the *Youth Matters (*HM Government 2005b; DfES 2006) programme was developed. The Children's Minister Beverley Hughes led on this issue, with the close support of the senior official, Anne Weinstock, who led on youth policy within Hughes' Directorate. Weinstock had originally been recruited from the voluntary sector to lead the establishment of the Connexions service during Labour's first term. Connexions provided access to personal advisers to all young people aged 13-19, but within this universal offer developed more tailored support to target groups including NEET young people, or those involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. As they developed, local Connexions services bridged the different ideological strands of Labour policy directed at young people. In Youth Matters Hughes committed to the expansion of universal youth services, having secured an additional £200m from the Treasury to establish the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds (DfES 2006a: 5). These funds were to be invested in extending the range of positive activities available to young people in areas of economic disadvantage. Furthermore, the commissioning and provision of such services would be designed in accordance with the progressive universal approach and the five outcomes established under ECM (HM Government 2005b: chapter. 6).

However, responding to pressure from No10 (via Casey), *Youth Matters* bridged the contrasting policy approaches of No 10 and the Treasury by acknowledging the need for a separate targeted strand of youth policy focussed on a smaller group of young people engaged in anti-social behaviour. The Green Paper (HM Government 2005b) states:

> A minority of young people can get involved in behaviour that is a serious problem for the wider community, including anti-social behaviour and crime. The Government is clear that when this happens we need to respond firmly. This paper is therefore not just about providing more opportunities and support to young people, it is also about challenge. We need to strike the right balance between rights and responsibilities, appreciating the enormous contribution that young people can make while expecting them in return to appreciate and respect the opportunities available to them (HM Government 2005b: 4).

Thus, the commitment to refocusing resources towards early intervention programmes designed to prevent young people getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour had to be tempered. Hughes had to ensure that the new integrated multi-agency youth support

services, designed to support the early intervention approach, were also adequately focused on, and resourced to, address the behaviour of the specific groups of young people which concerned No10.

ECM DELIVERY UNDER THE BROWN GOVERNMENT (2007-2010)

In June 2007 Blair stepped down from office and Brown became prime minister. One of Brown's first tasks was to assemble his own Cabinet. Significantly, Brown's former Treasury policy adviser Ed Balls was appointed as Secretary of State in the renamed Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Balls was widely regarded as one of the leading architects of Treasury economic and social policy, and someone Brown had "complete dependence upon" (Seldon and Lodge 2010: xxiv-xxvi). This section considers the development of children's services policy under Balls' stewardship.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Children's Plan

Balls' arrival at the renamed DfES elevated the status of the ECM agenda and the CYP Directorate. The promotion of the Children's Minister Beverley Hughes to the Cabinet further illustrated the importance the Brown Government attached to children's policy. Balls immediately set up a review of departmental policy, focussed on the separation of ECM and education policy-making. The main output from this review was the publication of the *Children's Plan* (DCSF 2007) in December 2007. Hughes recalled the impact the Plan had on the Department:

> Ed was completely clear that the two agendas [ECM and schools' reform] were mutually interdependent and they had to be compatible and given equal prominence in the Department. …it did shake up the Department and it did emphasise the Government's view expressed through him and ministers - that the school standards agenda and the wider agenda on children, young people and families were equally important, and as I say they were mutually interdependent, they needed each other. He really emphasised that (interview with Beverley Hughes).

In effect the Children's Plan marked a re-launch of the ECM programme. The Plan reflected the progressive universal perspective which had underpinned ECM. It emphasised the contribution that universal services were expected to make towards supporting the general well-being of all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (DCSF 2007: 5). It was argued that "early-years settings, schools and colleges must sit at the heart of an effective system of prevention and early intervention working in partnership with parents and

families" (144). In the *Staying Safe: Action Plan* (DCSF 2008), which followed in February 2008, the broad ECM definition of child safeguarding was retained again emphasising the contribution that universal services were expected to make towards child safeguarding. The specific contribution of the social work profession in relation to safeguarding continued to be overshadowed.

Unshackled from Blair's schools' reform priorities, the Children's Plan sought to fuse the Schools Division's school standards agenda and the CYP Directorate's broader focus on child well-being under the ECM five outcomes framework. Whilst the Plan accepted that educational attainment remains one of the most important determinants of life chances, it argued that a broader focus on child well-being was necessary to ensure that all children achieve well in school. Schools were identified as central to the delivery of the early intervention and preventative approach at the heart of ECM:

> Almost all children, young people and families come into regular contact with early-years settings and with schools and colleges…If these services are not integrated with more specialist provision, by looking for early warnings that children might need more help and by providing facilities for specialist services to operate so they can be easily reached by children and families, we will be hamstrung in achieving our broad ambitions for children and young people. The best schools and colleges have already shown us how that can be done and that it enhances, not compromises, attainment (DCSF 2007: 144).

The "21st century school" (145) was identified as one that recognises the interdependency of pupil attainment and well-being. Accordingly, the Government announced plans to introduce new performance indicators to measure for schools' contribution to child well-being, that would be incorporated into the Ofsted inspection framework (150). A commitment was also made to align the training of teachers with the rest of the children's workforce under the CWDC (152).

The Children's Plan also committed the DCSF to strengthen the legal status and authority of children's trusts, led by local authorities, over all other local children's services agencies (146-149). There was an implicit acceptance that not enough had been done since the Children Act 2004 to ensure that agencies were focused on the same priorities and performance targets and, therefore, committed to joined-up working. The Plan notified all local agencies that they would in future be held more directly accountable for the delivery of the ECM outcomes (148). In addition to the new performance indicators and inspection criteria discussed above, there was a clear expectation that schools would make a full contribution to local children's trust planning and commissioning. This marked a departure

from the exemption to schools granted under the Children Act 2004. This exemption was later formerly removed under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Balls also presided over a shift away from Blairite policies on youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Balls had never been a supporter of Blair's authoritarian populist youth policies and favoured a preventative rather than punitive approach (Seldon and Lodge 2010: 80). In a newspaper interview shortly after his appointment, Balls argued that ASBOs represented a failure of social policy (*The Guardian,* 28th July 2007). The Children's Plan placed greater emphasis on the provision of positive activities for all young people. Chapter six began with the statement:

> We want all young people to enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years and to be prepared for adult life. Too often we focus on the problems of a few young people rather than the successes of the many – we want a society where young people feel valued and in which their achievements are recognised and celebrated (DCSF 2007: 125).

As a first step towards creating a more positive youth policy programme, the Home Office's Respect Unit was scrapped, and responsibility for all aspects of children's policy shifted into the DCSF. Anne Weinstock, the Department's youth policy lead, was simultaneously appointed to head up a Youth Task Force. Working to Beverley Hughes, Weinstock had been an advocate of the more positive aspects of the Youth Matters programme. Louise Casey, the outgoing head of the Respect Unit, was moved to a new post in the Cabinet Office to lead a review of community engagement in fighting crime (Home Office 2007).

Yet policy interventions targeted at specific sub-sections of the child population were not altogether abandoned. Following the *Think Family* review (Cabinet Office 2007; 2008), initiated under Blair, ministers accepted that a targeted approach was needed to support the estimated 140,000 families facing complex and multiple problems (2007: 6). These families were seen as requiring more tailored packages of support (and challenge) to be delivered by a range of specialist child and adult services to tackle problems such as worklessness, poor mental health and substance misuse. Local Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) were established to develop such an approach. However, such targeted interventions were only an addendum to the focus on early intervention and prevention through universal services emphasised in the Children's Plan. The Treasury only committed £18m over three years in the 2007 CSR to support the development of FIPs (Cabinet Office 2007: 9). This appears relatively insignificant in comparison to the additional £250m committed to expand the

number of Sure Start Children's Centres, increase the availability of free childcare, and increase one-to-one tuition for under-attaining school pupils (HM Treasury 2007: 200).

The Conservatives Party's Broken Britain Policy Framework

Just as the ECM framework achieved greater prominence within the renamed department, a resurgent Conservative Party began to articulate its own distinctive social policy priorities. Moving away from the dominant stress on economic policy under the Thatcher and Major Governments, the party's new leader, David Cameron, sought to establish a new social policy framework to support "a modern and compassionate conservatism which is right for our times and our country" (Cameron 2005). Cameron asked Iain Duncan Smith to lead a review of Conservative social policy, supported by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) which Smith had founded in 2004. The framework developed through the review challenged the progressive universal dimension of Labour policy and the redistributive perspective on child poverty that informed it. It therefore incorporated an implicit critique of ECM.

In Levitas' (2005) terms, the Conservative's applied a "moral underclass" perspective on poverty in order to challenge Labour's redistributive policies. Under Labour redistribution of economic resources through tax and benefit reform and investment in public services was based on the premise that economic disadvantage was the primary cause of poor outcomes for children (HM Treasury 2001). The Conservative's Social Justice Policy Group challenged this view in *Breakdown Britain* (Conservative SJPG 2006). The report claimed that Labour's child poverty strategy had failed to address the needs of those living in the deepest poverty (3). It was argued that the persistent poverty of this group in society had to be explained in terms of a more complex range of problems than just limited economic resources. Thus the review team recommended an approach to social policy "based on the belief that people must take responsibility for their own choices but that government has a responsibility to help people make the right choices" (Conservative SJPG 2007: 7). They identified "five pathways to poverty" which had to be addressed: (1) family breakdown; (2) educational failure; (3) economic dependence; (4) indebtedness; and (5) addiction (Conservative SJPG 2006: 13). This analysis of poverty and welfare came to be referred to as the 'Broken Britain' perspective (Hayton 2012).

The report *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens*, (co-authored by Duncan Smith and the backbench Labour MP Graham Allen) identifies the specific implications for children's policy of the Broken Britain perspective. The report challenges the

progressive universal definition of early intervention, which underpinned ECM and earlier Labour social policy initiatives such as Sure Start. It argued that well intentioned investments in universal services had failed to address the complex and multiple problems faced by the 'dysfunctional base' in society. In contrast, the five pathways to poverty required the development of social policy programmes which address the "psychosocial background" of families and which contribute to the "intergenerational transmission of disadvantage" (Allen and Duncan-Smith 2008: 29-30). It was claimed that only 'evidence-based' early interventions, such as the US Family-Nurse Partnership programme, targeted at dysfunctional families with very young children, can break this transmission. Otherwise governments will have to support ever more expensive 'late' interventions further down the line.

The Re-discovery of the Children's Social Work Profession

It is within this context that the Shadow Children's Minister Tim Loughton set up and chaired the Conservative Party commission on children's social work. In his foreword to the Commission's report, titled *No More Blame Game: The Future for Children's Social Workers* (Conservative Party 2007), David Cameron highlights the contribution which social workers could make to fixing Broken Britain:

> Iain Duncan Smith's comprehensive work through the Social Justice Policy Unit has starkly articulated the challenges facing Britain's 'broken society'. Social workers, particularly those dealing with *child protection* cases, are at the sharp end of these challenges, often dealing with very difficult and damaged families. They have a key role to play in early intervention to keep families together wherever possible, and in meeting the needs of vulnerable children who are taken into care when their safety is put at risk (Conservative Party 2007: Cameron Foreword – emphasis added).

In contrast, Labour's ECM framework identifies child protection as just one aspect of a much broader safeguarding agenda affecting all children. Furthermore, it offers no privileged status to the social work profession seeing it as simply one component of a generic children's services workforce. Loughton identified Labour's neglect, even at times hostility, towards children's social work as a major weakness in its children's services policy. In an interview for this research Loughton stated:

> I remember the first ADSS conference that I went to, and Alan Milburn was the health secretary and it was around the time of Climbié, and Alan Milburn absolutely pointed the finger of blame at the social workers. He got up on stage at that conference and basically said you are a shambles you've got to get your act together. It was very much the blame game, and that went down very very badly. I think they were passing the buck on blame rather than appreciating that the Government was part of the situation as well. So the social work profession at that stage was feeling very bruised,

> they were losing a lot of people, vacancy rates were high, the calibre of recruits coming out of universities was poor, it was an ageing profession, and it was getting worse, and being told by the secretary of state that you are all crap and that Victoria Climbié is your fault didn't exactly act as a recruitment tool" (interview with Tim Loughton)

By 2007 Loughton had been in post for six years and had been able to visit many children's social services departments and talk to numerous frontline social workers (interview with Tim Loughton). Loughton subsequently set up the Commission to address concerns raised through these visits and develop a policy response on behalf of the Conservative Party. The Commission opened up a route through which representatives of the children's social work policy could try and influence Conservative policy. In contrast, as this chapter and the previous one have illustrated, Labour ministers had largely excluded the profession from the children's services policy-making process.

Having acquired a deep understanding of the pressures faced by children's social workers, Loughton developed through the Commission a series of recommendations which were warmly received by social worker leaders, even though most of whom were not natural allies of the Conservative Party (interviews). The first Commission recommendation was to ensure that the preventative family support role of the profession, which was clearly set out under the Children Act 1989, should be maintained and resourced. The Children Act 2004 was now placing a greater emphasis on the responsibilities of other agencies with regard to prevention and family support, and relegating social work to crisis intervention. The Commission also made a number of recommendations to address the training and recruitment needs of children's social work, needs neglected by Labour ministers. An advertising campaign to improve public perceptions of the profession was also recommended. Recognising the need to ensure greater input into policy-making the Commission also called for social workers to be encouraged to join a professional body which could achieve a similar status to the British Medical Association or the Royal College of Nurses. There was also a call for the appointment of a Chief Social Worker to act as a champion for the profession in government and in the national media. Although no specific recommendations were made, the Commission report also stressed the increasing bureaucratic demands placed on frontline social workers under Labour (43). Reducing bureaucracy would become the central theme in a later policy statement called *Child Protection: Back to the Frontline* (Conservative Party 2010), published in the run up to the 2010 election.

The Party Politics of Baby P

After a turbulent start to his premiership, Brown emerged as a more secure prime minister by the autumn of 2008. He was widely credited with having saved the British banking system from collapse, and had silenced critics within the Labour Party who had questioned his leadership qualities (Seldon and Lodge 2010: chapter 5). With Brown in the ascendancy, Cameron searched for opportunities to discredit Brown and his Government and reclaim the political initiative. In November 2008 the death of a 17 month-old boy in the north London Borough of Haringey, the same borough where Victoria Climbié had died, presented an opportunity to attack Labour children's services policy.

Three Weeks in November 2008

During his short life Peter Connelly suffered horrific abuse and neglect before he died in August 2007. In November 2008 his mother, her boyfriend and her boyfriend's brother were all sent to prison. After the trial there was extensive and prolonged media reporting of the circumstances surrounding Peter's death, referred to at the time as 'Baby P' for legal reasons. Baby P was well known to local children's services agencies including Haringey Council's CSD, health services and the Metropolitan Police, and was the subject of a Child Protection Plan. The fact that Baby P had died in Haringey was arguably a factor which raised the profile of the case. However, to fully understand why this particular case received the level of coverage it did, and over such a sustained period, we have to appreciate the party political dynamics which drove the Baby P story.

In his book *The Story of Baby P: Setting the Record Straight,* Ray Jones (2014) provides a meticulous account of how the media, but particularly *The Sun* newspaper reported the case. Following the first significant reporting of Baby P by the BBC on 11th November 2008, the Conservative leader David Cameron caught Gordon Brown unaware, using the case to launch an attack on the Government at Prime Minister's Question Time on 12th November. In doing so he made the Baby P case a party political issue. Following the Levison Inquiry we now know that Cameron had a very close relationship with the then editor of *The Sun* Rebekah Brooks. In the weeks that followed the paper's 'Campaign for Justice' stoked the fire which Cameron had lit. This campaign focused on the apparent failings of Haringey Council's CSD, largely overlooking the failings of local health services and the Metropolitan Police. Ironically, given the title of the "No More Blame Game" report (Conservative Party 2007) discussed above, the campaign pinned the blame for Baby P's death on the individual social

workers involved in the case, and Haringey's DCS Sharon Shoesmith, calling for them all to be sacked. Following a snap Ofsted inspection called by Ed Balls, and a report which reputedly went through 17 drafts, Haringey CSD was judged to be 'inadequate' reversing an earlier inspection judgment of 'good'. On this basis Balls went part way to meeting *The Sun's* demands by sacking Sharon Shoesmith. Under the same pressure Haringey Council sacked the social workers involved in Peter's case.

In his foreword to Jones' book *The Guardian* journalist Peter Butler comments that: "This was ostensibly a story about child protection, but really it was about media power, political calculation and bureaucratic back-covering on a grand scale" (p ix). This feels like a fair assessment of the events described above which all took place over a three-week period following the end of the trial. However, Jones also considers how subsequent reviews and reports, as well as tribunal hearings and court cases relating to the sacking of Shoesmith, kept the Baby P case in the media spot light for several years. He reflects on the damaging impact this had on the social work profession and inadvertently on the capacity of children's services agencies to protect vulnerable children. Jones argues that it became harder to recruit and retain high calibre social workers. Furthermore, increases in care applications provoked debate as to whether or not this was good news for children who need protecting (chapter 5). The title of this subsection is taken from the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) (2012) report *Three Weeks in November…Three Years On*. In this report figures demonstrating the sustained increase in care applications since November 2008 are set out. The increase is seen deemed to represent the collective national response of child protection agencies to the Baby P case. However, a less commented upon aspect of the Baby P case was the opportunity it provided the Conservatives to launch a sustained attack on Labour children's policy and the response the Government felt pressured to make.

Towards the 2010 Election: Broken Britain versus Every Child Matters

Jones (2014) comments that Cameron did not appear to be well briefed with regard to the detail of the Baby P case when he raised during Prime Minister's Question Time on 12 November 2008 (80). Even so, he still managed to land blows on a defensive Gordon Brown who had received no briefing. Significantly, Cameron had been well briefed in relation the weaknesses Loughton had identified in Labour's children's policy framework. In an interview for this research a party adviser gave the background:

> One of the reasons the story unfolded as it did was because the Conservatives through Tim [Loughton] were very well informed about the problems and so were able to

> advise David Cameron on how to respond with confidence… One of the reasons why the Party was able to kick up such a fuss was because we'd done the work. We knew where the weak spots in the Government's strategy where and we were able to single them out (interview with Conservative Party advisor).

Loughton knew that under Labour's broad and ambitious ECM policy framework, the reform of children's social work had been a relatively low priority. Through the Commission he had identified a series of recommendations to remedy the situation. The of publication *No More Blame Game* (Conservative Party 2007) had received little publicity (interviews). The Baby P case presented an opportunity to promote its recommendations. Iain Duncan Smith also seized the opportunity to promote his and Graham Allen's (CSJ 2008) early intervention policy framework, and implicitly criticise Labour's approach to children's policy. In an article in *The Guardian* he wrote:

> Without a comprehensive approach including earlier intervention with dysfunctional families to change their lives, as has been shown to work in other countries, the at-risk register will grow and we will see more sad outcomes like the tragic cases of children like Baby P and Victoria Climbié (Duncan Smith 2008).

In the context of media reporting of the Baby P case both Loughton's work on social work reform as well as Duncan-Smith's wider thinking with regard to Conservative social policy challenged the progressive universal framework championed by the DCSF under Balls. In this sense the case presented Conservative shadow ministers with a similar opportunity to promote their reform priorities for children's services, as the case of Victoria Climbié had presented to Labour ministers several years earlier.

As Jones (2014) observes, the immediate steps taken by Ed Balls in the midst of the media and political storm in November 2008 were at least in part a reaction to intense external pressure. DfES officials interviewed for this research confirmed that this episode had sent Balls and the Department more generally into a tailspin. Whilst appeasing *The Sun,* the decision to sack Sharon Shoesmith, along with the more general barracking of Haringey Council, went against the advice of prominent representatives of the children's sector who had generally been supportive of Labour children's policy (interviews). Paradoxically, while Balls' actions may have served to undermine the social work profession, as Jones (2014) claims, the Baby P episode also precipitated a new focus on social work reform which had been lacking in the years since the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. In an interview for this research one DfES official commented:

> By the time Ed has been through the ringer on Baby P he certainly understood why social work mattered, and then the more that the Government looked at social work

> the more it realised how it had been left to wither on the vine (interview with DfES official).

Responding to political pressure from the Conservatives, Balls set up the Social Work Taskforce (SWTF), under the independent chair Moira Gibb, to develop a programme of social work reform. Gibb was the chief executive of Camden London Borough Council and a former social services director who had been actively engaged in children's services policy-making through the ADSS. Although the SWTF had a wider remit (covering both children's and adult social work) the recommendations it made were consistent with those of the Conservative Party's 2007 Commission. The bulk of the recommendations covered training and recruitment reform. Also echoing the earlier Commission, the SWTF called for a new "programme of action on public understanding of social work" as well as improved professional representation through the establishment of a national college of social work (SWTF 2009). To oversee implementation of these recommendations the SWTF called for the creation of a Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) reporting to ministers. Balls accepted this and asked Gibb to set up and chair SWRB to oversee the implementation of the SWTF's recommendations (HM Government 2010a). In the wake of the Baby P case the Labour Government had belatedly accepted that central diktat and bureaucratic mechanisms alone were an ineffective way to manage the children's social work profession (interview with Dame Moira Gibb).

However, whilst Balls accepted that more needed to be done to support social workers managing complex child protection cases, the focus on universal services, which lay at the heart of the ECM reform programme (HM Government 2004) and the Children's Plan (DCSF 2007), remained. In fact, Balls consistently defended the ECM framework. As it was argued in the previous chapter, the Government had misleading presented ECM as a direct response to Lord Laming's Victoria Climbié Inquiry in 2003. Resurrecting this false narrative in the wake of the Baby P crisis, Balls asked Lord Laming to conduct a national review of progress made in relation to *implementation* of reforms introduced since the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. With great reluctance Laming agreed to do so (interviews). In a letter to Lord Laming, which is published as an appendix to the review's report, Balls excludes any reflection on the national policy framework from the review's terms of reference, simply asserting that: "The reforms introduced by the Government following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry set a very clear direction and have significantly strengthened the framework for safeguarding children" (Laming 2009: 94). Nonetheless, in his introduction to the report Lord Laming expressed his

frustration at an apparent failure to act upon the recommendations made in the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. He states:

> Whilst the improvements for services for children and families, in general, are welcome it is clear that the need to protect children and young people from significant harm and neglect is ever more challenging. There now need to be s step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm (Lord Laming 2009: 4).

This criticism is directed not just at local agencies for a failure to implement the ECM reforms. Repeating his earlier argument in the Victoria Climbié Inquiry he argues that child safeguarding is not a high enough priority at all levels of government. In place of the National Agency he sought but did not get in 2003, Lord Laming demanded a National Safeguarding Delivery Unit reporting directly to Cabinet. Notwithstanding this criticism and the exclusion of the national policy framework from the terms of reference for the review, Balls draws on the quote above to defend the Government's purported response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. In his foreword to the Government's official response he argues:

> Lord Laming's report confirmed that robust legislative, structural and policy foundations are in place and that our Every Child Matters reforms set the right direction and are widely supported. He underlined the progress that has been made and the positive difference that people working with children, particularly those most at risk, are making every day. But he was also clear that there needs to be a "step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm (HM Government 2009: Balls Foreword).

Elsewhere the DCSF's ongoing commitment to children's services reform within the ECM framework remained evident. Steps were taken to enhance the legal status of children's trusts and mandate the active engagement of all local children's services agencies beyond the new local authority CSDs. Most significantly, and reversing the exemption in the Children Act 2004, all education providers (local authority maintained and non-maintained) were added to the list of statutory children's trusts partners under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (DCSF 2009: 7). Following this, new statutory guidance on children's trust arrangements was issued in April 2010. Here it was clearly stipulated that legal responsibility for children's services planning and commissioning rested with all local agencies working in partnership through children's trust boards sitting outside of local authority organisational structures (DCSF 2010).

In *Support for All: The Families and Relationships* Green Paper (DCSF 2010) there is a shift in tone from ECM and the Children's Plan where the 'child' was situated at the heart of children's services policy. The repeated emphasis on the importance of 'family' in bringing

up children mirrors the narrative invoked in the Conservative Party's Broken Britain discourse and the CSJ's alternative *Green Paper on the Family* (CSJ 2010), also published in the run up to the 2010 general election. However, behind this presentational shift the Brown Government retained its commitment to the redistributive perspective which had informed ECM. Whereas the CSJ Green Paper emphasised the behavioural traits of dysfunctional families, the DCSF's Green Paper states:

> When examined overall, inequality can be seen as an important theme running through these family trends. For example, there is a marked contrast between the new opportunities being enjoyed by many young women from families on middle and higher incomes and the very limited horizons that teenage mothers, living in deprived areas, often describe. This emphasises the importance of ensuring modern family policy is progressively universal making available some help for everyone, with more directed at supporting those children and families who need help the most (DCSF 2010: 25).

It was argued in the previous two chapters that ECM can only be understood in relation to this redistributive perspective and the child poverty strategy driven by Brown. Even in the context of financial crisis and the prospect of potential electoral defeat in 2010 the Government stood firmly behind the pledge made in 1999 to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Towards this end, and as a parting shot, the Brown Government made the Child Poverty Act 2010 one of its final pieces of legislation. Under the Act four measures of child poverty are set out alongside a requirement for future governments to publish a national child poverty strategy (HM Treasury 2010a).

Conclusion

This chapter has challenged Rhodes' claim that policy-networks enjoy greater autonomy from central government in the post-legislative phase of policy implementation. Rather, it has been demonstrated that following the passage of the Children Act 2004 central government policy-makers continued to play a dominant role in the children's services policy-making process. More specifically it has been demonstrated that ministers continued to drive policy-making in Whitehall, and retained a close interest in the development of new service delivery arrangements at the local level. Under the stewardship of the Children's Minister, the new CYP Directorate supervised the establishment of new CSDs in every local authority to ensure compliance with the ECM five outcomes framework. Moreover, in tune with the principle of progressive universalism, the Directorate continued to emphasise the contribution that universal services needed to make towards improving child well-being. Thus, the contribution of SSDs and the social work profession continued to overlooked. On

the other, hand CIAG and representatives of the new DCS community continued to enjoy good access to central government policy-makers. However, the input of these groups remained largely limited to technical aspects of ECM implementation. Access to government rested on a shared interest in the successful implementation of the new service delivery arrangements mandated under the Children Act 2004. There was no evidence that this period of children's services policy-making was driven by autonomous policy networks.

The findings presented in this chapter have also further demonstrated the need to focus on the relationship between ministers and party leaders, and thus the relevance of intra and inter-party competitive dynamics to the development of policy. Even after the passage of the Children Act 2004, ministers and officials in the new directorate had to remain mindful of the Treasury's ongoing interest in children's services policy. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that, whilst Blair remained in office, tensions between No 10 and the Treasury constrained the delivery of the ECM reform programme. The emphasis on the general well-being of children and the need for greater central co-ordination of services in ECM, was challenged by Blair's continued focus on pupil attainment levels and his commitment to greater autonomy for schools. Similarly, Blair's authoritarian populist perspective on youth crime and anti-social behaviour pulled against the emphasis ECM placed on investing in positive activities for young people. It was only after Blair left office that these constraints were removed by the new Secretary of State Ed Balls. However, by the end of 2008 Balls was forced to respond to political pressure from a resurgent Conservative Party. The Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, used the case of Baby P to attack the Brown Government and its approach to children's services. Balls responded by acknowledging the need to rethink policy on children's social work.

Interestingly, the Baby P episode offers additional insight with regard to the use made of expert evidence in policy-making. To a certain extent the Conservative critique of Labour policy was informed by the evidence of social work experts, a number of whom had contributed to Loughton's commission on children's social work. Moreover, under pressure from the Conservatives, Balls appeared to open up a new route for representatives of the profession to influence policy, having commissioned new reviews by Moira Gibb and Lord Laming. On the other hand, the discussion above has also demonstrated that Cameron ignored the message in the title of the Conservative commission – no more blame game – in order to score political points against the Brown Government. Furthermore, in commissioning Gibb and Laming to review policy in this area, Balls was seeking to deflect

criticism of Labour policy, including its response to the Victoria Climbié case. Thus, in tune with the findings of the previous chapter, it is necessary to consider the political drivers of so-called evidence-based policy.

7) Children's Services Policy under the Coalition Government (2010-15)

The three previous chapters have investigated the roles played by ministers, departmental interests and policy networks in relation to children's services policy-making under the Labour Government. The findings have challenged the two dominant perspectives on contemporary policy-making, Rhodes' DPM – which emphasises the role of policy networks, and Marsh et al's APM – which emphasises the role of departmental interests. Rather, the evidence presented has lent support to Moran's regulatory state thesis, and the claim that contemporary policy-making is more politically-driven than the DPM and APM acknowledge. However, it is possible that these findings may only reflect the pattern of policy-making in the Labour era. Therefore, in order to provide a more rigorous test of the three perspectives on policy-making reviewed in chapter two, this final empirical chapter considers the development of children's services policy under the Conservative-led Coalition Government. The discussion in this chapter is also guided by the conceptual framework and five questions set out in chapter two.

The chapter is organised into two main sections. The first section considers the social policy priorities of the Coalition leadership and their relevance for children's services, thereby mirroring the discussion of Blair and Brown's priorities in chapter four. This is necessary in order to be able to address the question of the role played by Cameron and Clegg in this policy area, and the limits this may or may not have placed on the autonomy of Whitehall policy-makers and non-governmental policy networks. Furthermore, this section includes a discussion of Cameron's use of expert evidence to inform Coalition social policy. The second section of the chapter takes a detailed look at the development of children's services policy at the departmental level, and under the stewardship of the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove. The discussion here considers the development of new policy priorities, as well as the response of Coalition Government to the policy framework it inherited from Labour. It therefore addresses the questions of ministerial engagement in policy-making in Whitehall, the influence of policy networks, and the development of service delivery arrangements. It also connects with the discussion in the first section, by examining how Gove and departmental policy-makers responded to the priorities of the Coalition leadership. Thus, it sheds further light on the relevance of intra-party competitive dynamics to the development of children's services policy.

THE SOCIAL POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE COALITION LEADERS

Cameron's focus on social policy, following his election to the Conservative Party leadership, was part of his response to three successive and clear election victories for Labour. Cameron was shifting the Party towards the electoral middle ground. As part of his strategy, Cameron sought to distance the Party from the Thatcher era, and convince voters that the Conservatives were interested in addressing social problems, and therefore not exclusively focused on economic policy. The Broken Britain framework (Conservative Party SJPG 2006; 2007), discussed in the previous chapter, provided both a critique of Labour social policy and also articulated the approach for any future Conservative Government. Cameron's critique focused on the progressive universal strand of Labour social policy and, in particular, on the expansion of tax and benefits support for low income families. The central argument was that these reforms had contributed to an increased dependency on the state, but without improving the situation of the very poorest and most vulnerable in society. Importantly the Conservatives did not call for a radical reduction in welfare spending at this stage. Rather, the Broken Britain framework proposed a *refocusing* of the welfare system to address the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. As a core component of Cameron's early drive to modernise his party, Broken Britain challenged Conservatives to re-evaluate ideas and beliefs then widely held in party circles in relation to poverty and welfare.

Of course, the banking crisis of 2007-08 and its aftermath led the Conservatives to place ever greater stress on the cost of social policies. As Kerr and Hayton (2015) note, the onset of the banking crisis in 2007-08 has meant that "the party has emerged from this junction by steering itself along the road to the right" (121). Cameron had begun to speak of an "age of austerity" before the 2010 election (D'Ancona 2013: 13). But it was only after the election that the Coalition's overriding priority emerged as the rapid reduction of the budget deficit, primarily through cuts in public spending. Hayton and McEnhill (2015: 140) argue that whilst the Coalition Government retained the concept of social justice, it became "imbued with a more traditionally conservative meaning". They point towards the re-emergence of the more familiar Thatcherite themes of welfare dependency and family self-sufficiency. However, it is important not to over-generalise, but to acknowledge that tensions remained within Coalition social policy, and were even exacerbated by austerity. Even within the constraints of deficit reduction, Cameron and Duncan-Smith continued to promote the Broken Britain framework. The tension this created with Osborne's deficit reduction plan was compounded by the

separate social policy priorities promoted by the Deputy Prime Minister, and Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg.

Deficit Reduction and Public Service Reform

The Coalition: Our Programme for Government (HM Government 2010b) underlined deficit reduction as the most important policy priority. Furthermore, the primary means to achieve this goal were to be reductions in public spending rather than increased taxes (15). The detail of specific cuts started to emerge in the weeks and months immediately after the election. Signalling the urgency attached to deficit reduction £6 billion of in-year savings were announced by Osborne on 24th May 2010, just a few days after the election. These reductions included a £670 million cut to the DfE budget. Following the October spending review the DfE was asked to find additional savings of 12 per cent by 2014-15. In addition to grant funding from the DfE, social policy initiatives targeted at children and families are often funded (or topped up) from non ring-fenced local authority budgets. However, these budgets were also placed under severe strain following the spending review, which also cut the funding to local government by 28 per cent over four years (HM Treasury 2010b: 49).

The Treasury claimed that the pace and scale of deficit reduction was unavoidable. It was deemed necessary to "secure economic stability at a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economy and put Britain's public services and welfare system on a sustainable long term footing" (HM Treasury 2010b: 5). However, Cameron and Clegg sought to counter-balance the pessimistic statements emerging from the Treasury with a more upbeat message on public services. They emphasised the opportunity the Coalition had to transform public service delivery and address what they saw as the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of services inherited from Labour. In their joint Foreword to the Coalition programme Cameron and Clegg declared:

> We share a conviction that the days of big government are over; that centralisation and top-down control have proved a failure. We believe that the time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today; to recognise that we will only make progress if we help people come together to make life better. In short, it is our ambition to distribute power and opportunity to people rather than hoarding authority within government. That way we can build the free, fair and responsible society we want to see (HM Government 2010b: Cameron and Clegg Foreword).

In the early days of the Coalition Cameron talked about the 'Big Society' taking the place of big government. Sharing this ambition, if not the language, Clegg promoted "radical decentralisation" (HM Government 2010c: Clegg Foreword), an idea at the heart of the

Localism Bill. Clegg repeated the argument that Labour's command and control structures needed to be dismantled, in order to, not only save money, but also to spur innovation and make public services more responsive and accountable to the public.

Just over a year into the Coalition Government the Cabinet Office's *Open Public Services* White Paper (HM Government 2011a) elaborated on these general statements on public service reform. The promise made was to put "power in the hands of people and staff" (HM Government 2011a: 8). A distinction was made between individual services where welfare consumers ought to be able to exercise choice; neighbourhood services which ought to be organised collectively but at the neighbourhood level; and commissioned services where professional decision-making may be more appropriate. In relation to commissioned services, incorporating children's services, it was declared that "open public services will switch the default from one where the state provides the service itself, to one where the state commissions the service from a range of diverse providers" (29). Nevertheless, while the stated ambition was to relax bureaucratic constraints, it was recognised that local commissioners had to be supported through nationally administered accreditation systems which could identify suitable service providers, and that mechanisms were needed to hold both providers and commissioners to account for performance. However, no clear plans for implementing purchaser/provider splits across all, or a selected number of, public services were set out. Echoing Labour's *Modernising Government* (Cabinet Office 1999) this White Paper offered only a set of general principles alongside a simple promise to do 'what works' (HM Government 2011a: 29).

Cameron and Social Justice

The Conservative's embrace of 'social justice' occurred prior to the banking crisis. Although critical of Labour's significant spending on welfare payments, the Conservative perspective on social justice developed through the Broken Britain policy review did not assume the substantial cuts to public spending which later occurred. On the contrary, the Conservative advocates stressed that short term investment was needed in order to gradually redirect public services towards supporting families in the deepest poverty. Duncan-Smith, the architect of the Broken Britain framework, argued that more 'early' interventions to address the complex needs of this group in society would save the taxpayer money by preventing the need for more expensive 'late' interventions further down the line. Together with Graham Allen, Duncan-Smith (2008) explained this in the following terms:

> Government should be aware that, while the approach is proactive and pre-emptive, it must be in addition to, not instead of, the more reactive 'fire-fighting' needed for specific immediate problems. For some considerable time we should, to use a public health analogy, expect to be swatting mosquitoes while the work of draining the swamp gears up and proceeds (Allen and Duncan-Smith 2008: 113).

Once in government the intense pressure to deliver substantial savings on the welfare budget, meant that Conservative ministers had to modify their vision of a new approach to Conservative social policy. However, the Broken Britain framework was not altogether abandoned.

Welfare Dependency

In his inside account of the "fraught politics of welfare", D'Ancona (2014: chapter 5) details the way in which the Coalition Chancellor George Osborne directed key aspects of DWP policy, despite the opposition of Duncan-Smith as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Osborne was sceptical of Duncan-Smith's ability to deliver reform and also identified large and immediate cuts in expenditure on welfare benefits as an obvious area to make major savings. There was even some political capital to be gained by stressing the need to curb those supposedly living it up on welfare. This approach was both popular with the public and those on the right of the Conservative Party who had not signed up to the Broken Britain framework. Osborne demanded an £18 billion reduction in the welfare bill by 2014-15, as well as announcing specific measures including a benefits cap and the scrapping of child benefit for higher earners. None of these had been agreed in advance with Duncan-Smith. Furthermore, these measures were framed in a tough rhetoric on welfare dependency which was translated in the popular press, to Duncan-Smith's dismay, as a battle between the 'skivers' and the 'strivers' (D'Ancona 2013: 94).

Alongside family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, educational failure and indebtedness, welfare dependency had been identified as one of the 'five pathways to poverty' in the Broken Britain framework. However, in the context of Osborne's deficit reduction plan, and given public support for welfare cuts, addressing welfare dependency now had to become the overriding priority for Duncan-Smith and the DWP. Thus *21st Century Welfare* (DWP 2010), published in July 2010, rationalises the need to cut spending on welfare benefits in terms of the Broken Britain perspective on poverty and welfare. In his foreword Duncan-Smith states:

> Too often governments have tried to tackle poverty but ended up managing its symptoms. The changes outlined here are based on a recognition that poverty cannot be tackled through treating the symptoms alone… The only way to make a

> sustainable difference is by tackling the root causes of poverty: family breakdown; education failure; drug and alcohol addiction; severe personal indebtedness; and economic dependency. These problems are interrelated and their solutions lie in society as a whole. However, we must recognise that the benefits system has an important role to play in supporting personal responsibility and helping to mend social ills. We are going to end the culture of worklessness and dependency that has done so much harm to individuals, families and whole communities (DWP 2010: Duncan-Smith Foreword).

In April 2011, the Coalition published *A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives* (HM Government 2011b). This fulfilled the statutory requirement to publish a child poverty strategy under Labour's Child Poverty Act 2010. The Coalition Government also committed itself to Labour's statutory target to abolish relative child poverty by 2020. However, repeating the earlier critique of Labour's income transfers, the strategy focused on tackling three of the five pathways to poverty. Here tackling welfare dependency is placed prominently alongside measures to tackle educational failure and family breakdown. Thus, the Coalition's approach to talking child poverty focused on individual family circumstances, and downplayed the wider socio-economic determinants of poverty.

Despite the punitive rhetoric on welfare, Duncan-Smith's approach to welfare reform had a modestly progressive dimension, drawing on the Broken Britain perspective. A key component of the welfare reform strategy was the introduction of the Universal Credit (DWP 2010: 19-24). This initiative had been initially promoted in the CSJ's report *Dynamic Benefits* (CSJ 2009). The Universal Credit was to provide the centrepiece of a simplified benefits system which, it was claimed, would better respond to changes in individuals' circumstances. The aim was not simply to incentivise work and reduce dependency on welfare benefits, but to support those making the transition to work through a gradual and planned withdrawal of benefits. Importantly, these proposals were presented in 2009, by which time it had become clear that that whichever party won the 2010 election would have to find substantial savings in public expenditure. Still committed to the Broken Britain framework, Duncan-Smith sought to fend off critics who suggested that such an approach to social policy could no longer be afforded:

> I hope these recommendations are accepted by politicians and civil servants alike. There are those who say this is not a priority because we are mired in a recession and the jobs aren't there. We disagree, for unless we put the system right now, we run the risk of increasing the number of residually unemployed, only this time it will manifest itself as large numbers of younger people permanently excluded from gainful employment. That is why we simply cannot go on talking about the importance of

> getting people into work while we persist in creating disincentives for the very people we say should be in work. Our existing complex and inefficient benefits system should finally be laid to rest; otherwise all the talk about improving the number of people going back to work will be just another form of empty rhetoric (CSJ 2009: Duncan-Smith Preface).

As a concession to Duncan-Smith, Osborne agreed that £2billion of savings from the welfare budget could be reinvested by the DWP in the Universal Credit. However, the initiative was beset by widely reported implementation problems. Toynbee and Walker (2015: 121-22) suggest that this may have been a deliberate ploy to discourage benefit claims, but there is no clear evidence to support this claim. The pressure to reduce welfare spending so quickly may have contributed to the implementation problems, but this pressure came from the Treasury and was not part of the original design of the initiative.

Early Intervention

Cameron also took steps to promote the Broken Britain framework during the early years of the Coalition Government. Even after the defeat of Labour, and in the context of the budget deficit, this remained necessary in order to ensure the compatibility of Conservative and Liberal Democrat policy priorities. Furthermore, Cameron claimed that the Coalition's approach to social policy would be informed by independent experts rather than party political ideology. This also usefully conveyed the impression that the Coalition Government would build upon and adapt the policies and delivery mechanisms it inherited from Labour, not simply abandon them.

The Field Review of Child Poverty

One of Cameron's first acts was to commission the Labour MP Frank Field to carry out a review on child poverty and life chances. Field was a longstanding campaigner on child poverty and therefore arguably well-qualified to lead the review. However, Field's opposition to the Brown Treasury's tax and benefits reforms was well known. His report for the Coalition published in December 2010 was titled *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults* (Field 2010). The report reflected his long held personal views on the best approach to tackling poverty. Field sought a greater emphasis on the role of public services in supporting families to address the wide range of issues related to poverty other than income (12). Specifically, Field argued that:

> The evidence about the importance of the pre-school years to children's life chances as adults points strongly to an alternative approach that focuses on directing government policy and spending to developing children's capabilities in the early-

> years… The Review recommends that the Government gradually moves funding to the early-years, and that this funding is weighted toward the most disadvantaged children as we build the evidence base of effective programmes (Field 2010: 6).

However, although Field was critical of one strand of the Brown Treasury's child poverty strategy (HM Treasury 2001) discussed in chapter four, his recommendation was entirely consistent with the second strand – the need for better public services for children growing up in poverty. This was in line with the principle of progressive universalism and the ECM framework. Furthermore, the Brown Treasury had itself prioritised pre-school services through its significant investment in Sure Start children's centres and free childcare places.

The Allen Review of Early Intervention

Anticipating Field's recommendation, Cameron had also commissioned the Labour MP Graham Allen to conduct a review of early intervention policy. Allen's report was published in January 2011, a month after Field's, and addressed the question of the evidence base for intervention focussed on the pre-school years. The choice of Allen to lead this was significant. Like Field, Allen was somewhat of an outsider in the Labour Party, and had not been closely involved in the development of social policy under the Labour Government. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Allen had already worked with Duncan-Smith and the CSJ to develop a new approach to children's policy (Allen and Duncan-Smith 2008). Allen's report for the Coalition titled *Early Intervention: The Next Steps* (Allen 2011) built on the earlier report he had co-authored with Duncan-Smith. However, he avoided the more punitive and implicitly partisan tone of this earlier report.

Echoing Frank Field, Allen recommended that public spending be redirected towards 'evidence-based' early intervention programmes targeted at pre-school children and their families. According to Allen this required a shift towards more specific and accredited early intervention programmes directed at the most vulnerable children and families. This repeated the message in Allen's earlier report with Duncan-Smith, and again challenged the progressive universal approach to children's services at the heart of ECM. One of Allen's key recommendations was the establishment of an Early Intervention Foundation to lead on the evaluation of existing programmes and build the evidence-base for early intervention (p xvii). Significantly, however, Allen's report did not promote any radical re-organisation of children's services. Seeking to reassure those working in the sector Allen stated:

> Much excellent work has been done, at both local and national level, but new and additional lines of attack are needed. That it is the purpose of this Report and no one need fear its proposals. They will not threaten any effective policies which are now in

> place, nor provide any excuse or rationale for cutbacks. Instead, they offer sharper tools to measure the execution and impact of Early Intervention, to improve the execution and impact of successful policies, to make more effective use of current public expenditure and to achieve lasting cost savings in later years (Allen 2011: pix).

Allen envisaged a pivotal role for Labour's Sure Start children's centres in the delivery of Early Intervention. He also recognised the vital importance of close working across organisational and professional boundaries. Repeating the argument made in the ECM Green Paper (HM Government 2003a: chapter 4), Allen's report stated that: "Local authorities with their health partners also have a key role to play in promoting and brokering integrated working at a local level" (Allen 2011: 54). The structural reforms introduced under the Children Act 2004 had been designed to address this.

Troubled Families

Conservative ministers saw integrated working as pivotal to the successful implementation of the *Troubled Families* programme (DCLG 2012). Cameron launched the programme in December 2011 and presented it as the Coalition Government's response to the August 2011 riots. The programme committed £448 million to address the needs of the 120,000 most 'troubled families'. Drawing on the Broken Britain narrative Cameron concluded his launch speech:

> People in troubled families aren't worthless or pre-programmed to fail. I won't allow them to be written off. So we must get out there, help them turn their lives around and heal the scars of a broken society (Cameron 2011).

The programme was based on the premise that these families are invariably known to multiple public agencies, each addressing specific needs, but typically in an uncoordinated and therefore ineffective and expensive way. Troubled Families, then, calls for co-ordinated multi-agency packages of support designed to address needs earlier and in a more holistic way. Whilst the punitive rhetoric surrounding the programme may have been different, these were themes identified, and which had begun to be addressed, under Labour. The programme was in fact an adaptation of Labour's *Family Intervention Projects* (Cabinet Office 2007), even though Cameron presented it as a direct response to the August 2011 riots.

Clegg and Social Mobility

Soon after his election as party leader in December 2007, Nick Clegg established the Independent Commission on Social Mobility. He asked Martin Narey, the then the chief executive of the children's charity Barnardo's and chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition, to chair the Commission. The Commission made a series of recommendations in six key

areas of policy: child poverty, early-years, education, employment, health and communities (Independent Commission on Social Mobility 2009). As a continuation with with Blair's education discourse, improving social mobility was closely linked to the promotion of equality of opportunity (4). Also echoing Labour, but contradicting the Conservative's Broken Britain perspective, the Commission accepted the direct causal link between poverty and life chances:

> Low income affects every aspect of children's lives: health, housing, education and family life. Low income puts children's standard of living well below what most people would deem an acceptable level for a country as wealthy as the UK (Independent Commission on Social Mobility 2009: 5).

The Commission acknowledged the precarious financial position of the UK following the banking crisis, but still asserted the principle of continuing the modest economic redistribution which had underpinned Labour's reforms of the tax and benefits system. In tune with the principle of progressive universalism, the Commission called for continued investment in universal public services, with additional resources to be made available to early-years settings and schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.

However, the Coalition's welfare programme, and its new approach to child poverty, represented a rejection of this recommendation. In order to emphasise the Liberal Democrats' continued commitment to the principle of social mobility, and highlight the party's contribution the Coalition's policy programme, Clegg presented the report *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility* (HM Government 2011). Unable to adhere to the Commission's recommendations in relation to tax and benefits, continued investment in universal education was presented by Clegg as the primary means to increase social mobility. By the time the strategy was launched, the Liberal Democrats had succeeded not only in protecting the English schools budget, but had also secured the £2.5billion 'pupil premium' to be targeted at the schools serving the most disadvantaged pupils (D'Ancona 2013: 41-42). Furthermore, £760 million was also secured to expand the number of early education places available for disadvantaged two year olds (Teather 2012). Rationalising this investment, and echoing the progressive universal perspective in ECM, the mobility strategy stated that:

> We will take a progressive approach, focusing most resources on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, but narrowing gaps in opportunity all the way up the income scale (HM Government 2011: 11).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY UNDER THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

The Coalition leadership adopted a less centralising approach to government and service departments compared to Labour. Cameron largely appointed ministers who already had experience of particular policy portfolios during the opposition years, and also avoided the frequent reshuffles characteristic of the Blair years. Although Clegg was the Deputy Prime Minister, his role was limited as he had only very limited access to the policy-making resources concentrated in No10, and had not taken up a specific policy portfolio. The main constraint on departmental policy-making was the Treasury spending reductions. However, unlike Brown, Osborne did not use the Treasury to systematically oversee domestic policy and the major service departments (with the notable exception of the DWP). Thus, the Coalition leadership (Cameron, Osborne and Clegg) intervened sporadically rather than systematically in the world of the departments. Furthermore, Cameron's commitment to a 'modernised' Conservative social policy approach, and his conciliatory approach to the Liberal Democrats, waned over the course of the Coalition Government (Kerr and Hayton 2015). Whilst ministers had to remain mindful of the policy positions of the Coalition leadership, they generally enjoyed more autonomy than their Labour predecessors. However, contrary to the APM view of policy-making, this did not strengthen the position of Whitehall officials. On the contrary, it created the space within which Michael Gove, as the Secretary of State for Education, emerged as the key figure in the children's services policy-making process.

The Official Stance on ECM

The first signal that the ECM agenda would not be a priority for Gove came with the immediate renaming of the Department. Having had three different titles under Labour, culminating in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Department now simply became the 'Department for Education' (DfE). A couple of months later a member of the Education Select Committee asked Gove about his department's ongoing commitment to the ECM policy framework. In response Gove stressed that the Department's focus would be firmly on the issue of school and pupil attainment, and not be directed towards delivery of the broader five ECM outcomes. Gove offered two arguments to defend this decision. Firstly, he criticised the bureaucratic structures which had been created to support the implementation of ECM:

> They [the five ECM outcomes] are unimpeachable – gospel, even. But the point I would make is that in a way they are what every teacher will want to do…I don't think you need a massive bureaucratic superstructure to police it (Gove: House of Commons Education Committee - 28th July 2010).

Secondly, Gove argued that education was the most important determinant of life chances:

> Sometimes people say, "You really need to emphasise well-being, because there's too much emphasis sometimes on attainment." I know where folk are coming from when they say that, but my own view is that if you come from a working-class background, what you want is a school where you will be well taught and where you will receive the qualifications that allow you to decide whether or not you're going to get a good job, go on to college or pursue an apprenticeship. Actually, the single most important thing that a school can do is equip children with the qualifications and self-confidence to take control in the future (Gove: House of Commons Education Committee - 28th July 2010).

Thus, it was clear that ECM framework and the work of the CYP Directorate would not receive anything like the comparable support from Gove which Ed Balls had given. However, Gove recognised that the broader approach to child well-being at the heart of ECM was difficult to simply discard given Cameron's continued emphasis on social justice. Furthermore, ministers recognised that it was difficult to articulate a critique of ECM. Following his long service as Shadow Children's Minister, Tim Loughton was appointed as a junior minister in the CYP Directorate in May 2010, serving under Gove. He reflected on the Coalition's stance on ECM. He commented that:

> It [ECM] was one of those things you had to go along with. There was no great enthusiasm for ECM.... I always saw it as a slightly gimmicky way of trying to distil down 'we believe in children aren't we great'. It was motherhood and apple pie. I'm not interested in the slogans. I'm much more interested in - are the services being provided that will aid those outcomes that ECM articulates? We never got excited by ECM. But in the same way, when we came into power, we did not abolish it. We were accused of 'oh you abolished ECM', but we never did. There was never a piece of legislation that says ECM is now defunct this is what we do. It just naturally evolved (interview with Tim Loughton).

The DfE did not embark on a process of actively dismantling ECM. However, it is argued below that ECM was dismantled by default through a process of "arena shifting" (Bauer and Knill 2012) Three aspects of DfE policy are discussed below which illustrate how the capacities of ECM service delivery mechanisms established under Labour were undermined, without being officially removed.

Academies and Free Schools

A few months later in November 2010 the *Importance of Teaching* White Paper (DfE 2010) set out proposals for education reform. In his foreword to the White Paper Gove departed from the broad focus on child wellbeing which had been at the heart of ECM and Balls' Children's Plan. Reiterating the argument made to the Education Select Committee in July 2010, education was framed as the only way to improve the life chances of all children. Gove stated:

> Education reform is the great progressive cause of our times. It is only through reforming education that we can allow every child the chance to take their full and equal share of citizenship, shaping their own destiny, and becoming masters of their own fate (DfE 2010: Gove Foreword).

Gove argued that the structural reform of the education system was absolutely essential to this cause. In opposition Gove had openly admired Labour's Academies programme led by the Blair ally Andrew Adonis. In particular, he supported the principle of schools being freed from local authority control. However, whereas Labour had promoted Academy status as a means to help turn around failing schools, Gove's White Paper declared: "It is our ambition that Academy status should be the norm for all state schools, with schools enjoying direct funding and full independence from central and local bureaucracy" (DfE 2010: 52). Financial incentives were introduced to entice higher performing schools in both the primary and secondary phases to convert to Academy status alongside failing schools which could be compelled to do so. Alongside this Free Schools to be run by teachers, charities and parents' groups were also announced.

Gove's prioritisation of the Academies and Free School programme had significant implications for the broader children's agenda for two reasons. Firstly, Gove re-allocated significant departmental resources away from the CYP Directorate to support his priority education programme. Thus, the resources available to the CYP Directorate fell by 50 per cent (interview with DfES official). Giving evidence to the Education Select Committee in January 2013, the by then former DfE minister, Tim Loughton stated that "it was difficult for the children and families agenda to get a look in, in the bulldozer that was the schools reform programme" (cited in Smithers 2015: 259). Secondly, structural reform reduced the capacity of local CSDs and children's trusts to influence school policies and promote the broad focus on child well-being within ECM. Gove's lack of commitment to the development of children's trusts was manifest in his announcement that the Government would abolish the

duty for schools to co-operate with local children's trusts introduced by the Brown Government in 2009 (DfE 2010: 29). Although this change was ultimately blocked in the House of Lords.

In sharp contrast, Cameron offered a key concession to Clegg on education policy in the form of the Pupil Premium (and later on free school meals), so that the progressive universal perspective and the broader child well-being focus of the Labour era were not entirely abandoned. The condition attached to Pupil Premium funding was that schools must use it to address the additional needs of the most disadvantaged pupils. Echoing the tone of Ed Balls' Children's Plan, Gove's The Importance of Teaching White Paper includes the following statement:

> Good schools play a vital role as promoters of health and wellbeing in the local community and have always had good pastoral systems. They understand well the connections between pupils' physical and mental health, their safety, and their educational achievement. They create an ethos focused om achievement for all, where additional support is offered early to those who need it, and where the right connections are made to health, social care and other professionals who can help pupils overcome whatever barriers to learning are in their way (DfE 2010: 28-29)

However, departing from the Children's Plan, there was no commitment to compel schools to adopt this perspective. As already noted, the capacity of local authority CSDs to hold schools to account was to be curtailed. Perhaps more significantly, the Ofsted school inspection framework was revised. This followed the statement made in White Paper that "Ofsted has been required to focus too much on inspecting schools against government policies, at the expense of a proper focus on the core function of schools: teaching and learning" (68). The measurement of school performance shifted back to an overriding emphasis on levels of pupil attainment, rather than the broad five ECM outcomes. In contrast to Labour's Children's Plan, schools were no longer positioned as the main setting for ECM delivery.

Early Intervention Policy under the DfE

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)

It was argued above that Cameron sought to further the Broken Britain policy framework developed by Duncan-Smith through the development of early intervention programmes. Furthermore, this stress on early intervention appeared as a point of continuity with Labour policy, signalling the refocusing rather than abandonment of the key delivery mechanisms for ECM. One of Allen's (2011) key recommendations had been the creation of an Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to lead on the evaluation of existing programmes and the

creation of an evidence base for early intervention. Allen, supported by Duncan-Smith, lobbied Cameron persistently in the months following his report's publication to ensure that the EIF was established (interview with DfE official). Cameron eventually agreed and Duncan-Smith announced the creation of the EIF to coincide with his launch of the cross-departmental strategy *Social Justice: Transforming Lives* (HM Government 2012) in March 2012. To help set up the EIF the DfE committed £3.5 million over two years, after which time it was expected to become self-financing. This financial commitment was at the personal behest of Cameron.

Opened in April 2013, the EIF is run by a consortium including children's charities and the LGA. At the time of writing EIF involved a number of individuals who had be closely involved in the development of children's services policy under the Labour. The chief executive Carey Oppenheim was previously an adviser to Blair on early-years policy. The Trustees include Clare Tickell, previously the chief executive of the charity Action for Children; Christine Davies previously the chief executive of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes and ex DCS at Telford and Wrekin; and Ray Shostak, previously DCS in Hertfordshire and later the Head of Public Services at the Treasury. At the Treasury Shostak had been a close adviser to the then Chief Secretary Paul Boateng when he led the ECM Green Paper process. He later served as the Head of the PMDU under Gordon Brown (www.eif.org.uk: 7th September 2015).

However, given Cameron and Clegg's less interventionist role (compared with Blair and Brown), the influence of the EIF and the development of early intervention policy hinged on the co-operation of Gove. However, whilst Gove also presented himself as a committed social reformer, he was not an admirer of Duncan-Smith personally and was sceptical of his reform priorities (interviews). For, as already stressed, Gove's overriding priority was the structural reform of the school system to raise levels of pupil attainment. Thus, schools no longer had a wider role in the delivery of a broader set of children's policy priorities. Meanwhile, significant cuts to local authority funding for early intervention and a relaxation of central regulation further undermined the remaining institutions of ECM. Rather than a refocussing of early intervention away from universal services towards more accredited specialist programmes, as recommended in the Allen review, there was a retreat from early intervention nationally and locally.

Early Intervention Funding

Under Labour the funding for early intervention services was allocated via a series of separate ring-fenced grants. These grants included specific allocations to fund universal services, such as children's centres and youth services, as well as allocations to fund targeted programmes to address specific issues such as teenage pregnancy. In line with the principle of progressive universalism, funding allocations were weighted in favour of those local authority areas serving the most disadvantaged communities. Following the emergency budget in June 2010 all of these separate grants were rolled up into a single Early Intervention Grant for each local authority. From 2013-14 early intervention funding was no longer paid through a ring-fenced grant, but was rolled up in the overall central revenue grant to local authorities. These changes were presented as a relaxation of central spending controls, designed to cultivate localism. Speaking in December 2010, Gove argued that the EIG would provide a "new flexibility to enable local authorities to act more strategically and target investment early, where it will have the greatest impact." Ahead of the publication of his report, Allen commented that: "The essence of the grant ties in with the thinking of my review" (bbc.co.uk 14th December 2010). In theory it would enable local authorities to shift funding towards accredited early intervention programmes targeted at the most vulnerable children and families.

However, while funding allocated to schools was protected, year on year cuts were made to funding allocated to support early intervention. According to a report published by NCB (2015: 3), between 2010-11and 2015-16 the total amount allocated fell by 55% - from £3.2 billion to £1.4 billion per year. The same report suggests that a number of local authorities sought to protect early intervention spending by finding savings elsewhere. Nonetheless, they estimated that actual spending by local authorities fell by 24%, equating to a cut of over £700 million per year. Within the Department itself, as noted above, resources were re-allocated to support the delivery of the Academies and Free Schools programme, resulting in a 50 per cent reduction in the capacity of the CYP Directorate. Furthermore, the Directorate's officials were asked to focus on a streamlined set of policy priorities including special educational needs, childcare and children's social work (interview with DfE official). Early intervention policy was not a priority. The emphasis on localism in official statements obscured what was in reality a process of policy dismantling through arena-shifting (Bauer and Knill 2012). The relaxation of central regulation covering children's centres, youth services and local authority CSDs also contributed to this strategy.

Early Intervention Delivery Mechanisms

Children's Centres

With regard to children's centres, youth services and children's trusts, the DfE sought to keep its distance from reorganisations at the local level. The Department did not seek to defend these key settings for ECM delivery, nor redirect local commissioners towards the more targeted early intervention programmes recommended in the Allen review. With regard to children's centres, the DfE came under pressure from the All Parliamentary Group (2011) for Sure Start to re-establish central oversight to ensure local authority compliance with the responsibilities set out in the Childcare Act 2006. The Group was concerned that the range and quality of services available through children's centres was becoming increasingly variable as budgets were being cut. Responding to this pressure, in April 2013 the DfE set out what it described as the new "core purpose" for children's centres (DfE 2013a). However, the House of Commons Education Committee (2013: 13) considered this statement "too vague and broadly worded". The DfE official response was dismissive and re-affirmed Gove's non-interventionist approach: "While the government understands the Committee's concerns, the government believes that focus should now be on developing services within the broad framework the core purpose document provides" (House of Commons Education Committee 2014: 3).

Youth Services

Similar concerns were expressed regarding compliance with the duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requiring local authorities to provide sufficient leisure activities for young people outside of school (House of Commons Education Committee 2011). The DfE was again reluctant to intervene in relation to local reorganisations but stood firmly behind the commitment made in *Positive Youth.* This gave "local authorities the flexibility and responsibility to prioritise public funding for services for children and young people and families according to local need" (HM Government 2011d: 64). As an indication of Gove's lack of engagement in youth services policy, by January 2013 he had still not visited a single youth project after his first two and half years as Secretary of State (CYP Now - 21 January 2013). A few months later Gove handed over responsibility for youth services policy to the Cabinet Office.

Children's Trusts and Director's of Children's Services (DCS)

The DfE adopted the same stance in relation local children's trusts and the DCS role. In October 2010 it withdrew the statutory guidance on children's trusts published by Labour just

before the election (DCSF 2010). However, the legal requirement for local children's trusts under the Children Act 2004 remained. Again this was presented as lifting the burden on local authorities, providing freedom and flexibility to innovate (Easton et al 2012). As noted above, the DfE did intend to remove the statutory duty placed on schools to co-operate with local children's trusts, but was stopped by the House of Lords. However, changes to the inspection framework meant that compliance with the duty was no longer monitored. The capacity of DCSs to act as local champions of early intervention and integrated children's services also waned as local authorities restructured their senior management teams. In April 2013 the DfE issued revised statutory guidance on the role of the DCS and the LMCS. This reaffirmed the legal status of both roles as set out in the Children Act 2004. However, in addressing concerns that DCSs were increasingly being asked to take on additional responsibilities the guidance simply states that: "Local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS and the LMCS before allocating any additional functions other than children's services" (DfE 2013b: 4). In May 2014 the SOLACE felt emboldened to re-open the debate they lost prior to the Children Act 2004 regarding the creation of the DCS role. A survey published in July 2014 found that 59 of 152 DCSs were responsible for additional local authority directorates (CYP Now, July 2014).

Group Influence over Early Intervention Policy

In chapter four the close relationship between the Labour Treasury and representatives of the children's charity sector was outlined. Both the Treasury and the children's charity sector were committed to tackling child poverty. Sharing the Treasury's redistributive perspective, which identified low levels of family income as the primary driver of poverty and poor outcomes for children, the charity sector supported Brown's reforms to the tax and benefit system which increased the incomes of poor families. However, under the Coalition's welfare reform programme many of these income transfers were scrapped. The Coalition Government's attempt to try and prevent the children's charity sector campaigning on the impact of welfare reform, through its lobbying bill (Toynbee 2013), provided clear evidence of the ideological distance between the Government and the sector. Furthermore, the close personal association between some children's charity leaders and the Labour Government figures made access to the new government difficult to achieve. Those leaders and charities less closely tied to Labour and who had prepared for the possibility of a change of government made a smoother transition than those who had not not prepared adequately for a

possible change in ruling party (interviews). However, this required a reassessment of policy priorities and campaigning strategies. Two charity leaders explained:

> We are carefully not that critical of government. I think everything we write at the moment isn't a how dare you cut. I think that's a stupid argument, I wouldn't do it. It's more about what are you going to choose to prioritise? (interview with charity leader).
>
> You do have to be flexible, not in terms of changing base positions, but in understanding that priorities change, that external situations change and that if you are so rigid in the policy positions that you take, that you can't change and adapt yourself then you will quickly become unhelpful and useless. So there is something about being intellectually flexible enough and also politically astute enough to be able to operate in whatever the prevailing political atmosphere is (interview with charity leader)

However, even after these adjustments were made, the pattern of engagement between DfE officials, ministers and representatives of the sector changed. Following the Children Act 2004 engagement with the charity sector was extended to include representatives of the new DCS community. Interaction was focused on the development and implementation of the ECM delivery programme. In contrast, under Gove the DfE's lack of commitment to ECM closed off the previously existing channels through which representatives of the charity and statutory children's sectors could access officials and ministers. One DCS estimated that the last Labour Secretary of State Ed Balls was on first name terms with between 30 and 40 DCS, whereas Gove had only ever met a small handful (interview). Moreover, Labour ministers formally engaged with the sector through regular meeting with CIAG. Notably CIAG survived the change in government, yet a senior DfE official interviewed in 2013 acknowledged the impotence of the CIAG under the Coalition and the marked shift government-group interaction:

> I think in the, for much of the 2000s there was a fair degree of equivalence between the voluntary sector, some in the statutory sector…and civil servants and politicians. There was a lot of dialogue. It was a pretty open policy and implementation agenda. I suppose there is slightly less of that open constant dialogue than there once was. The CIAG for example is not the force it was (interview with DfE official)

The more open relationship with representatives of the sector characteristic of the Labour era was founded upon a broad alignment of policy priorities and a shared interest in delivering the ECM programme. However, even allowing for adjustments made by the more far-sighted charity leaders, both before and after the 2010 election, such an alignment was not achieved during Gove's leadership of the DfE. In the context of the financial crisis many in the sector had recognised the need to demonstrate more effectively the benefits of early intervention,

both in terms of children's outcomes and long term financial savings (see for example Action for Children 2009). It was initially hoped that the framework developed through the Allen review would form the basis of a new partnership between government and the sector. Some in the charity sector were also enthused by Cameron's commitment to the 'Big Society' in the early years of the Coalition (interviews). However, as the two quotes below (taken from two separate interviews) underline, Gove did not prioritise early intervention.

> I think Michael Gove, I think he's pre-occupied mainly with well a very particular agenda on schools and there I think the shame is that it is a very narrow agenda and we would be really interested in thinking about how do children's non-cognitive skills and abilities and seeing children in the round contribute not only, to you know, both their learning outcomes, but also to their wider outcomes in terms of getting them prepared to be well rounded citizens? There is no agenda for that in the Department (interview with charity leader).

> We have a Secretary of State who is education obsessed, it has been very difficult to land the broader safeguarding issues, and actually what we've got with this administration, they are great on single issues, the adoption stuff and all that, but the vision, the ECM vision which I would have lots of criticism of, but that sense of children and the totality of children I think has largely gone actually (interview with charity leader).

Children's Social Work Reform: Professional Renewal (2010-12)

One of the key remaining areas of policy for the CYP Directorate was social work reform. With the exception of adoption policy, Gove was not actively involved in this aspect of children's policy during his first two years in office. During this period children's social work reform was led by the junior minister Tim Loughton (interviews with DfE officials). As noted in the previous chapter, Loughton had extensive experience of children's policy having effectively served as the shadow minister since 2001. Furthermore, he had identified children's social work reform as his main priority. As shadow minister Loughton had worked closely with representatives of the children's social work profession to develop reform proposals (Conservative Party 2007; 2010). Loughton had argued that the default response from government to high profile child protection cases, such as Victoria Climbié, was to intensify central regulation at the expensive of professional autonomy. Yet in reality, he argued, the increased bureaucratic demands placed on social workers had compounded the problems, contributing to low morale, widespread recruitment and retention problems, as well as limiting the time available for direct work with children and families. Importantly, Loughton's work in this area had been presented by Cameron as a key component of the

Conservative Party's new approach to welfare policy, driven by a commitment to social justice and the recommendations of the Broken Britain policy review.

Furthermore, as was also noted in the previous chapter, in the wake of the Baby P crisis, Balls had belatedly accepted that the case for children's social work reform and set up the SWTF followed by the SWRB. Under Moira Gibb's leadership the work of the SWRB was driven primarily by representatives of the social work profession. Importantly, the work of the SWRB received the backing of Loughton when he was appointed after the 2010 election, and progress continued to be made on the implementation of the SWTF's recommendations (interviews). Universities and employers were working together to improve social work training and develop a standardised professional competencies framework. In addition, the new College of Social Work began to operate in April 2012, taking over responsibility for the reform programme from the SWRB. Loughton's personal focus on the revival of children's social work centred on reducing the bureaucratic burden handed down by central government. Fulfilling a promise made in the report *Child Protection: Back to the Frontline* (Conservative Party 2010) published shortly before the election, one of the first actions taken by Loughton was to scrap the Contact Point database created under Labour. The rationale provided for abolition was that it did not resolve the problem of information sharing identified in successive serious case reviews, yet it placed excessive data collection requirements on social workers and other children's services professionals. More significantly, Loughton convinced Cameron of the need for a more comprehensive overhaul of central prescription. Professor Eileen Munro was subsequently commissioned to lead a comprehensive review of child protection policy.

The Munro Review of Child Protection

Significantly, the Munro Review (2011) was the first comprehensive review of child protection policy not conducted in the immediate aftermath of a high profile child death. Furthermore, the focus on 'child protection' in the Munro Review was important. The term child protection distanced the review from the very broad understanding of child 'safeguarding' within ECM and the Children Act 2004. Importantly, Munro had been publically critical of the lack of focus in child protection policy. Speaking on the BBC's Panorama programme during the Baby P crisis, she criticised Labour's universalist approach. She commented that; detecting child abuse is like "trying to spot a needle in a haystack", and that "it gets harder if you make the haystack larger" (BBC 17th November 2008 – cited in Jones 2014: 145). Furthermore, she was known to be a strong strong advocate of greater

professional autonomy for children's social workers and had argued strongly against the increasing bureaucratisation of frontline practice exemplified by the Contact Point database. The Munro Review made a number of recommendations aimed at reducing the bureaucratic burden. These included a rewrite of the statutory guidance *Working Together* (HM Government 2010d), and a new inspection framework more closely focused on frontline practice rather than bureaucratic compliance. These were officially accepted by the DfE. Recommendations regarding social work training and professional practice complemented the work of the SWRB and were also accepted (DfE 2011).

Although critical of aspects of Labour policy, it is important to recognise that Munro did also recognise the balance children's social work professionals need to strike between decisive intervention to protect children from abusive or neglectful parents, and action to keep families together where this remains in the best interests of children. Under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 social work professionals have a duty to develop and co-ordinate multi-agency packages of 'family support'. In an interview for this research Munro underlined the importance of this role:

> They [the Conservatives] were keen on 'child protection' and that was the title of the review. But if you look at my report I did make it clear that protecting children includes preventing maltreatment, which means the children's services in total (interview with Professor Eileen Munro).

Whilst Loughton was keen to emphasise the differences between Coalition policy in this area and Labour's universalist approach, he did support Munro's emphasis on action to prevent family break-up. This was consistent with the claim that "social justice is about making society function better – providing the support and tools to help turn lives around" (HM Government 2012: 4 – cited in Hayton and McEnhill 2015: 142). Although Loughton was not directly influenced by Duncan-Smith, a Conservative Party adviser interviewed for this research pointed out that: "he was part of the same milieu experiencing this re-assessment of where the Conservatives had been and where they needed to go, part of the same kind of loose movement". Loughton personally supported Munro's recommendation that local authorities and statutory partners be placed under a duty to secure sufficient 'early help' for children and families (interview with Tim Loughton). The Government's refusal to accept this recommendation reflected an ideological disagreement between Loughton and Gove. In September 2012 Cameron agreed to replace Loughton, and Gove subsequently re-orientated the children's social work reform programme. Again, intra-party dynamics were a key determinant of policy change in this area.

Children's Social Work Reform: Re-regulation (2012-15)

An Ideological Shift

As noted above, Gove's only significant involvement in children's social work reform prior to September 2012 was in relation to adoption policy. Spurred by his own positive personal experience as an adopted child, Gove called for an increase in the number of children being adopted. The *Adoption Action Plan: Tackling Delay* (DfE 2012) was published in March 2012. At this stage Gove's commitment to increase adoption numbers did not form part of a holistic strategy for children's social work. However, following Loughton's departure this changed. In November 2012 Gove set out his vision for children's social work in a wide-ranging speech titled: "The Failure of Child Protection and the Need for a Fresh Start" (Gove 2012). Gove drew upon the well-known cases of Victoria Climbié, Peter Connelly (Baby P), and the more recent case of Khyra Ishaq, to create a narrative of system wide failure. This was used to advocate swifter intervention to 'rescue' children from their abusive or neglectful families. Gove presided over a shift back towards the "moral authoritarianism that characterised the traditional Thatcherite approach to society" (Hayton and McEnhill 2015: 144). He stated:

> Too many local authorities are failing to meet acceptable standards for child safeguarding. Too many children are left for too long in homes where they are exposed to appalling neglect and criminal mistreatment. We put the rights of biological parents ahead of vulnerable children – even when those parents are incapable of leading their own lives safely and with dignity never mind bringing up children. When we do intervene it is often too late (Gove 2012: 2).

This broke with the less emotive tone of the Munro Review which Loughton had purposefully commissioned outside the shadow of the high profile cases Gove referenced. Gove's focus on cases where children ought to have been taken into care more quickly, diverted attention from the broader family support role of social workers under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, as well as Munro's early help recommendation. Furthermore, it also signalled Gove's rejection of Allen's (2011) review of early intervention policy, and Cameron and Duncan-Smith's Broken Britain framework. In a departure from his earlier public statements, Gove was openly critical of the institutions created under ECM which has been set up to promote early intervention. He argued that:

> The whole structure we inherited – a tangled web of trusts, partnerships, committees and boards pulling professionals away from their core responsibilities – has not made children safer (Gove 2012: 9)

Gove's (2012) speech also signalled a shift in attitude within government towards the children's social work profession. In contrast to Loughton, who nurtured a positive working relationship between government and professional representatives, Gove publically criticised the profession for its "optimism bias", arguing that:

> Social workers are encouraged to develop relationships with adults who are careless of their own welfare and dignity. And for perfectly understandable reasons sometimes professionals are reluctant to directly and robustly challenge the behaviour of people whose trust they are trying to win. But all the time, while adults are trusted, children continue to suffer (Gove 2012: 6).

In a subsequent speech, (Gove 2013) announced the Government's intention to re-examine reform of social work training and explore new models for the delivery of children's social services. In doing so Gove claimed that the Government remained committed to implementing the recommendations of the Munro Review and reducing the bureaucratic burden on children's social work professionals. However, in both cases, it was clear that his vision for children's social services departed markedly from those who represented the profession, including Munro.

Social Work Training

In his November 2013 speech Gove referred to the "need to improve the professionalism of those who work with children" (Gove 2013: 3). However, his approach to reviving the professionalism of children's social workers involved a rejection of the profession's own reform programme[3]. In an interview for this research, the former chair of the SWRB, Dame Moira Gibb, commented on the neglect of the established reform programme:

> I am disappointed that the Reform Board's work has not had the continued attention from DfE in particular that it needed. It wasn't a quick win but a 10-year programme. New things are pursued instead (interview with Dame Moria Gibb).

Gove had appointed Martin Narey to carry out a new review of children's social work training. Narey had formerly served as the Director General of the Prison Services in the Home Office before becoming the chief executive of Barnardo's, but had no personal experience as a social worker. He had, however, become Gove's trusted adviser on adoption reform, having himself long advocated swifter intervention to take children into care. The SWRB had advocated a generic (adult and children's services) and theoretically informed approach to social work training, serving as the basis for specialisation after this. Challenging

[3] In June 2015 it was announced that the College of Social Work, which had taken over responsibility for implementation of the SWTF's reform recommendations from the SWRB in April 2012, was to close after only three years.

this, in his report, Narey (2014) called for a clearer understanding of what a newly qualified *children's* social worker needs to understand. Ignoring the nuance of Narey's argument, the DfE press release which accompanied the report's publication rephrases his first recommendation, stating that: "the Chief Social Worker, Isabelle Trowler, should produce a single definition of what a newly qualified children's social worker needs to understand and be able to do, and universities should base their curricula on that, not ideological and theoretic concepts" (DfE 2014: 1).

The appointment of a Chief Social Worker had been promoted by representatives of the children's social work profession for a number of years, and had been backed by Loughton's Commission in 2007. Prior to the transfer of children's social services from DoH to DfES in 2003, the Chief Inspector for Social Services had provided a trusted source of advice to ministers and officials. The appointment of a Chief Social Worker was intended to fill the gap left after the transfer of responsibility for children's social services from DoH to DfES, which resulted in the deletion of the Chief Inspector role. However, Trowler's appointment was made by ministers and officials loyal to Gove with no input from representatives of the social work profession. Furthermore, Trowler lacked the depth of experience required for the Chief Inspector role, and is considered by many to have simply become a spokesperson for the Government rather than a critical voice representing the interests of the profession within government (interviews).

Gove's approach to the reform of social work training displayed a deep mistrust and hostility towards those who represented the profession. Evetts (2003) suggests that the concept of professionalism is now imbued with a different meaning. Whereas, professionalism was previously synonymous with autonomy from government, Evetts argues that a "new professionalism" is associated with compliance with politically determined policy goals. Moreover, failure to comply is presented as an indication of unprofessional behaviour. In the case of children's social work this supports a strategy of 'blame avoidance' (Weaver 1986) in the case of high profile policy failures. It enables government policy-makers to hold individual social workers accountable for breaches in procedure. This approach was evident in March 2015 when the Government announced powers to jail workers for up to five years if they fail to act appropriately in response to signs of child abuse (*The Guardian*, 3 March 2015).

The Outsourcing and Inspection of Children's Social Work

In October 2013 the DfE announced the creation of a £30m fund to support the development of new models children's services delivery. A month later, Gove argued that: "We need to break out of bureaucratic ways of working to generate the sort of innovation that delivers dramatically better results" (Gove 2013: 3). He floated the idea of the children's social services functions of local CSDs being outsourced to external service providers, and challenged the assumption that social workers must always be managed by senior professional colleagues. Echoing the rhetoric of his Academies and Free Schools programme, Gove argued that greater diversity in the provision of children's social services was a to spur to innovation.

In April 2014 Gove and Edward Timpson (Loughton's replacement as Children's Minister) sought to remove any remaining obstacles to the outsourcing of children's social services. They opened up a brief (six week!) consultation on proposals to enable children's social services functions to be outsourced. Of course, aspects of children's social services had long been delivered by charitable and private sector providers, but these proposals opened up the possibility that for the first time child protection investigations, decisions about initiating care proceedings and removing children from their families, and decisions about where children should live, could be outsourced to the market and handed over to companies such as G4S and Serco (Jones 2015). A small group of prominent individuals close to the Government supported the idea, including Martin Narey, Gove's adviser on adoption and social work training, as well as the Chief Social Worker Isabelle Trowler and her former boss the Director of Hackney Children's Services Alan Wood. The Labour Peer Lord Warner was also supportive. Warner was acting on behalf of the DfE as an adviser on the re-organisation of heavily criticised children's social services in Birmingham (Jones 2015: 7-10). However, the proposals generated significant alarm amongst most representatives of the children's social work profession and local authority CSDs. In a joint letter the proposals were strongly criticised by 37 senior social work academics, including Professor Munro (*The Guardian*, 14 May 2014). The ADCS's response was more conciliatory but nonetheless expressed the clear view that the delivery of child protection services "should not be predicated on a profit motive" (ADCS 2014).

Jones (2015: 3-6) traces the origins of the idea to outsource children's social services back to the Labour era. He points out that the Labour Government had introduced the idea of independent Social Work Practices (DfES 2006b). Supported by the LSE Professor Julian Le

Grand, this led to the establishment of a small pilot programme. Le Grand was a well known advocate of the use of market governance mechanisms in the public sector (Le Grand 2003). Despite the very small scale of this pilot programme, and its very inconclusive results, Le Grand later became an adviser to the Coalition, as it developed its more radical plans for outsourcing. Jones' (2015) narrative implies policy continuity between the Labour and Coalition Government's. However, this obscures the ideological shift in children's policy over which Gove presided. In marked contrast to children's policy under Labour, and under the Conservative's Broken Britain framework, Gove rejected the focus on early intervention and family support in children's policy. Gove's moral authoritarian approach emphasised the need to rescue children from abusive and neglectful parents. His deployment of outsourcing supported his drive to re-orientate local authority CSDs and children's social work professionals towards compliance with this objective.

Significantly, the policy of outsourcing was deployed in conjunction with the inspection process. Poor inspection outcomes threaten the careers of senior professionals and make it more difficult to recruit and retain frontline staff. In January 2015 it was reported that, under the new inspection framework introduced in 2013, nearly half of councils inspected had seen a fall in their performance rating. 24 of 41 councils had been labelled "requires improvements" and seven as "inadequate" (CYP Now - 23 January 2015). In a number of cases Timpson instructed local authorities judged to be inadequate to develop outsourced arrangements for the delivery of child protection services. At the time of writing the number of local authorities *choosing* to outsource remained very small. However, the *threat* of inspection failure and the prospect of being forced to outsource services had the effect of ensuring compliance with the Government's new ideological priorities.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter, covering children's services policy-making under the Coalition Government, is broadly consistent with the previous three chapters on the Labour era. Thus, the argument that children's services policy-making is a more politicised process than either Rhodes' DPM or Marsh et al's APM suggest has been reaffirmed. Moreover, the dominant role played by Michael Gove in this policy area is consistent with Moran's emphasis on the role of ministers. From the outset, Gove was clearly committed to the re-orientation of departmental policy priorities and policy-making routines, to support his particular ideological priorities. This was immediately evident in the renaming of the Department and the reallocation of resources to support the implementation of his Academies

and Free Schools programme. Furthermore, Gove ignored the lobbying of sector representatives who argued that the Government needed to continue to invest in the early intervention services built up under Labour. Following the sacking of Loughton in September 2012, Gove also assumed a dominant role in relation to children's social work reform. Significantly, this involved a rejection of the reform programme developed by representatives of the children's social work, which Loughton had supported. Thus, it is apparent that Gove exerted considerable authority over both departmental policy-makers and non-governmental policy networks. Furthermore, his determination to break the link between local government and schools, and his drive to outsource of children's social services, again point towards the propensity for ministers to interfere in local service delivery arrangements

Interestingly, Gove appeared to enjoy more autonomy over children's services policy than any of his Labour predecessors. This reflected the less interventionist approach taken by the Coalition leadership, including the Prime Minister, David Cameron. Nonetheless, the discussion above suggests that Gove, like his Labour predecessors, had to take account of the policy position of party leaders. Specifically, Gove had to take account of Cameron's proclaimed commitment to social justice, and the policy framework developed by Duncan-Smith, even though he did not personally support it. He was careful to frame his de-prioritisation of the broader child welfare agenda and the ECM framework in terms of freeing local authorities from bureaucratic requirements. Gove followed what Bauer and Knill (2012) call a strategy of dismantling through arena shifting. Furthermore, Gove only intervened in relation to children's social work after Camron had agreed to replace Loughton as a junior minister in the DfE. Loughton's work on social work reform supported Cameron's claim, during the early years of the the Coalition, that the Government was committed to improving social justice even in the context of Osborne's deficit reduction plan. Thus, the dynamics of intra-party competition helped to shape the development of children's services policy under the Coalition Government, as they had done under Labour.

The deployment of expert evidence to legitimise politically determined policy changes was also a feature of children's services policy-making under the Coalition. Upon taking office Cameron notably commissioned two Labour MPs to carry out reviews of different aspects of children's services policy. This conveyed the impression that the Coalition was committed to an evidence-based approach and would not rush to dismantle the early intervention institutions built up under Labour. However, over time it became clear that, under Gove's stewardship, the DfE would not continue to invest in early intervention. On the other hand,

the Munro Review was well received and the Government initially appeared committed to the implementation of its recommendations. Moreover, this was consistent with Loughton's constructive approach in this policy area, and his willingness to listen to professional experts. But this approach to engagement with the children's social work profession was later reversed by Gove who turned to policy advisers from outside of the profession. Significantly, however, he did identify the value of proclaiming a commitment to evidence-based policy. Gove continued to reference the Munro Review when arguing for change, as well as the lessons learned from serious cases of child abuse, in order to legitimise his particular ideological priorities.

8) Conclusion: The Politics of Children's Services Policy

This research has examined the policy-making process for children's services over an eighteen-year time frame, covering both the Labour Government (1997-2010) and the Coalition Government (2010-2015). Responding to the research question formulated in chapter two, it has interrogated the two dominant models of British policy-making as well as the alternative hypothesis, inspired by Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state, that policy-making has become a more politically-driven process than either of these two models acknowledge. Of course, this research has been limited by its focus on just one area of policy. On the other hand, this has allowed for the collection of rich empirical data covering an extended timeframe, as the previous four chapters have demonstrated. It is now necessary to reflect upon these chapters and summarise what they reveal about the policy-making process for children's services, and how this might open-up new avenues of inquiry in other areas of policy. The format of this chapter follows the four headings set out in chapter two. Accordingly, each section discusses a different aspect of policy-making, each representing a point of contention between the three perspectives on policy-making discussed in chapter two. The concluding comments draw these strands together and reflect on the key insights provided by this case study.

Ministers and Departments

Both Marsh et al's (2001: 2003) APM and Moran's (2007) thesis of the British regulatory state position ministers as key players in the policy-making process. However, the roles played by ministers under the APM and the regulatory state are markedly different. Marsh et al emphasise the loyalty of ministers to their departments, and downplay the the role of ministers as members of the ruling party. They argue that "generally, the relationship between ministers and civil servants is harmonious" (Richards and Smith 2004: 778), and that ministers and civil servants pursue shared interests and resist radical reform, leaning on the BPT to defend the view that 'Whitehall knows best' (Marsh et al 2001: chapters 6-7; 2003: 313-14; Richards and Smith 2002: chapter 9; 2004). Richards and Smith (2004) acknowledge that minister-civil service relationships are more fractious when ministers draw ideas from outside the BPT. However, they claim that the examples of Michael Howard and Tony Benn represent exceptions rather than the norm. In contrast, under Moran's regulatory state ministers are seen to be more critical and mistrusting of Whitehall. Moreover, Moran

suggests ministers have become the source of perpetual policy reform rather than stability. His concept of hyper-innovation denotes successive waves of reform that support "the micro-management of policy, involving ministerial attention to the minutiae of policy delivery" (Moran 2007: 181).

In order to test the alternative APM and regulatory state perspectives on the role of Whitehall in policy-making and the nature of the minister-civil service relationship, this research considered the question: *To what extent do ministers seek to redirect policy-making in Whitehall?* This research uncovered some evidence to support the APM perspective and the view that policy is largely shaped by departmental views. Before the restructuring of central government departments under Labour's ECM programme in 2003, DoH held responsibility for children's social care policy. Under Frank Dobson, Labour's first Secretary of State for Health, the policy framework provided by the Children Act 1989 was retained. The *Modernising Social Services* White Paper (DoH 1998) did introduce new planning and performance management requirements for children's social care, but these were devised by DoH civil servants working closely with the representatives of local authorities. These new arrangements were designed to clarify, not change, the responsibilities of local authority SSDs. Significantly, the White Paper also stated that it was not, at this stage, the Government's intention to introduce structural reform of local service delivery arrangements.

Structural reform was eventually announced in the ECM Green Paper, and subsequently mandated under the Children Act 2004. However, resistance from the Secretary of State Charles Clarke and education interests in the DfES, led to to a watering down of the reform proposals. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury Paul Boateng, who led the development of the ECM Green Paper, had initially called for the creation of a new children's department in Whitehall. This would have involved ministers, including Clarke, relinquishing significant resources and responsibilities. Significantly, Clarke not only succeeded in protecting his departmental resources, but was also handed responsibility for the new CYP Directorate set up to oversee delivery of ECM. Furthermore, education interests in the DfES succeeded in winning an exemption for schools from local children's trust arrangements, a cornerstone of ECM. For a long period ECM was deemed a secondary priority by many officials in the DfES (interview Beverley Hughes). This fits with the picture of departmental power and the capacity of ministers and civil servants to obstruct reform described by Marsh et al.

As with the establishment of the Labour Government in 1997, there was also no immediate shift in children's social care policy following the establishment of the Coalition Government

in 2010. Initially, the Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (responsible for children's social care policy following the ECM reforms), devolved responsibility for children's social care policy to the junior minister Tim Loughton. Moreover, Loughton largely accepted the social work reform programme initiated by Labour. However, it must be noted that Loughton had himself been instrumental in pressuring the Labour Government to review its policies in this area following the Baby P crisis in November 2008. Importantly, Loughton's approach was to work in partnership with representatives of the social work profession, including Professor Eileen Munro whom he asked to carry out a review of child protection policy. Loughton sought to develop a long-term reform programme supported by the social work profession, rather than pursue centralising initiatives consistent with the concept of hyper-innovation.

However, notwithstanding these examples of ministers resisting radical reform, the survey of eighteen years of children's services policy presented in this study suggests that, in general, minsters played a more disruptive role in this policy area than the APM predicts. The pace of reform may not always have matched Moran's image of relentless hyper-innovation. Yet, at regular junctures, more pro-active ministers did disrupt established departmental priorities and policy-making routines. In the early Labour period, it was Paul Boateng who did most to change the direction of children's services policy. Whilst at the Home Office Boateng chaired the SEU's review of young people's policy (SEU 2000) and successfully argued for the creation of the Children's Fund and a new inter-departmental unit to lead on the integration of children's services policy – the CYPU. Dissatisfied with progress made by the CYPU, Boateng argued, from his new position as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, that more radical reform was needed. He was subsequently appointed by Blair to lead the development of the ECM Green Paper (HM Government 2003a).

Although, as noted above, Boateng was thwarted in his ambition to create a new Children's Department in Whitehall, ECM did lead to profound change at the national and local levels. It led to the re-organisation of children's policy functions across the DfES, the Home Office and DoH and the establishment of a new Directorate within DfES. At the local level ECM led to the merger of local authority education and children's social care departments, facilitating the creation of unified CSDs and multi-agency children's trusts. Furthermore, departmental resistance to ECM was eventually neutered following Brown's appointment of Ed Balls as Secretary of State in the newly named Department of Children, Schools and Families in 2007.

Balls provided a fresh impetus to the ECM reform process initiated by Boateng, and critically removed the exemption previously granted to schools.

Balls' successor, the Conservative Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove, was also clearly committed to changing departmental policy priorities and routines from the outset. Although Gove did not publicly abandon Labour's ECM framework, it was clear that under his stewardship this broader children's welfare agenda was to be de-prioritised. This was clearly indicated by the immediate renaming of the Department – which became simply the 'Department for Education'. But more significantly, Gove reallocated resources from the CYP Directorate to bolster his radical Academies and Free Schools programme. Furthermore, having initially devolved responsibility for children's social care policy to the junior minister Tim Loughton, Gove later intervened to redirect reform in this area. Having sacked Loughton, Gove called for a sharper focus on adoption and challenged the emphasis placed by social work professionals on working with families to prevent children being taken into care. He effectively overturned the workforce reform programme developed by the profession, and supported by Loughton. Thus Gove, like Balls, was quickly able to shift the focus of departmental policy-making, contrary to the APM stress on departmental influence. Under both the Labour and Coalition Governments, ministers successfully pushed through significant changes to departmental priorities and policy-making processes.

Policy Networks

Children's services policy-making was selected as a case study partly because it is associated with a diverse range of potentially influential interest groups representing the statutory and charitable sectors. The presence of these groups makes children's services policy-making a good candidate for Rhodes' network governance. Rhodes claims that network governance is a consequence of the hollowing out of central government. In his view, "central departments are no longer either necessarily or invariably the fulcrum, or focal organisation, of a network" (1997: 12). Thus, "the tradition of strong executive leadership founders on the bargaining games within and between networks" (1997: 22).

To test the network governance perspective, the question posed in chapter two was: *To what extent is policy shaped by policy networks independent of central government?* The opening up of the policy-making process to representatives of the children's services sector by Labour ministers initially appears to support Rhodes' pluralist perspective. Representatives of the children's charity sector in particular were invited to give evidence to early policy reviews,

most notably the Sure Start Review which looked at services for pre-school children. Furthermore, Treasury policy-makers leading the Review appeared to hold the expertise of charity sector leaders in high regard. That Naomi Eisenstadt, one of the participants in the Review, was later recruited to head up the Sure Start Unit was testament to this. It was also argued in chapter four that the NCB, but particularly its chief executive Paul Ennals, became a trusted adviser to senior ministers and even to Gordon Brown. Indeed, the NCB played an important role in helping government policy-makers to articulate the progressive universal vision for children's services. This vision underpinned early policy initiatives including Sure Start and the Children's Fund, and later the ECM reform programme, initiated in 2003, and which remained a priority up until Labour's election defeat in 2010. Furthermore, to support the delivery of ECM ministers formalised ties with representatives of the children's charitable and statutory sectors. Complementing regular dialogue with CIAG – the group representing the children's statutory and charitable sectors, a number of individuals were recruited to bolster the new CYP Directorate and provide support to the new Children's Minister.

However, the influence of children's charity sector representatives was generally limited to the design and implementation of specific policy instruments and reform initiatives. There was little evidence to support the contention that charity leaders had a significant influence on the Government's key policy priorities. On the contrary, the access enjoyed by charity leaders was conditional upon acceptance of Labour priorities, and a commitment to support their achievement. Given Labour's stated commitment to tackling child poverty, both through income transfers to poor families and through investment in children's services, this support was generally forthcoming. Representatives of the sector shared the Treasury's view that economic disadvantage was the key determinant of life chances. Furthermore, they also saw the opportunity that the Treasury's commitment to investment in children's services presented for the charity sector, given a mistrust of local government amongst Labour ministers. However, the input of charity leaders in relation to Treasury initiatives such as Sure Start and ECM, did not extend to the authoritarian populist youth services initiatives promoted by No 10. On the contrary, these were generally criticised by the charity sector. The limited influence of the sector was also evident when CIAG lost the argument over the structural reform of local children's services following the publication of the ECM Green Paper (HM Government 2003a). Moreover, having lost the argument, the group only maintained access to central policy-makers by falling in line with ministerial priorities and agreeing to work constructively to make the new arrangements work.

Access to central government policy-makers enjoyed by representatives of local authority children's services, following the passage of the Children Act 2004, was also conditional on acceptance of ministerial priorities. Members of the new DCS community created under the Act owed their elevated position in local government to it. They therefore held a shared interest in delivery of the ECM reform programme, even though structural reform had been opposed by CIAG and the LGA. When Gove de-prioritised Labour's ECM policy framework, representatives of the DCS community and the children's charity sector lost the relatively open access to government policy-makers they had enjoyed under Labour (interviews). Gove was unconvinced by those who argued that continued investment in early intervention services such as children's centres and youth services was needed to improve children's outcomes, even when this was framed as a saving to the tax payer over the long-run. Only those sector representatives not closely associated with the Labour era, and who were not openly critical of Coalition policy, retained a limited degree of access to government.

The example of the children's social work profession also neatly illustrates the way in which the input of non-governmental policy networks is closely connected to the attitudes of ministers to specific groups. As was argued in chapter four, during Labour's first term ministerial attitude towards local government, including SSDs, was unsympathetic. In fact, their courting of the children's charity sector was in part driven by ministers seeking to distance themselves from SSDs. Thus Boateng, took the view that SSDs had "let children down year and year upon year" (Boateng 2000). In the wake of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, this critical attitude towards SSDs and the social work profession hardened, and they were largely excluded from the development of reform proposals. Indeed, the progressive universal philosophy underpinning ECM emphasised the role that universal services, particularly schools, needed to play in terms of promoting the welfare of children growing up in poverty. The children's social work profession and SSDs were afforded only a peripheral role.

It was only following intense political pressure from the Conservatives, that Balls invited Moira Gibb to set up the SWTF to review this neglected area of policy. The Shadow Children's Minister Tim Loughton had identified the neglect of children's social work as a major weakness in Labour's children's services policy, and David Cameron exploited this during the Baby P crisis to attack Labour. Once the Coalition Government took power, and following Loughton's appointment as Children's Minister, representatives of the profession continued to enjoy good access to government policy-makers. Loughton asked Professor Eileen Munro to conduct a comprehensive review of policy in this area. But the fate of the

profession was tied to Loughton, and was therefore precarious. After Gove sacked Loughton, the reform programme developed by the SWTF and Munro was largely abandoned. Furthermore, Gove appointed his own small group of advisers from outside the profession. In summary, access to, and influence over, government policy-makers was closely related to the priorities of individual ministers. Rhodes (1997: 55) claims that "self-organizing interorganizational networks are part of the landscape of British government". This has not been the case in the children's services policy area.

Service Delivery Arrangements

The failure of children's sector representatives to block the structural reform of local children's services questions Rhodes' claim that that government predominantly "now works through networks characterised by trust and mutual adjustment" (1997: 47) and supports Marsh et al's claim that; "Seldom, if ever, is it non-state groups that dictate the nature of policy networks" (2001: 208). However, the dominance of the state in policy-making did not reflect the power of an administrative elite, as the APM implies, but rather the power of ministers. This observation needs to be further explored, as it addresses a key point of difference between the APM and the regulatory state perspectives discussed in chapter two. The APM assumes that the interests of ministers and civil servants are closely intertwined. Each side works together to retain control over policy-making at the central and local levels. Moreover, this pattern of policy-making promotes stable priorities and settled policy-making routines. In contrast, Moran's concept of hyper-innovation suggests that ministers are reluctant to devolve responsibility for the design of service delivery arrangements to Whitehall officials or local agencies. Rather, Moran's regulatory state is characterised by ministerial involvement in the minutiae of policy (2007: 181).

In order to investigate ministerial oversight of local agencies this research responded to the question: *To what extent do ministers shape service delivery arrangements?* During the early years of the Labour Government ministers encouraged local agencies to experiment with new arrangements for the delivery of social policies such as Sure Start. Under the umbrella of local Sure Start Partnerships, ministers wanted to see closer co-operation across the statutory and charitable sectors. At the surface level, this was suggestive of a shift towards network governance as Rhodes' model predicts. However, driving this experimentation was the determination of Labour ministers to distance the Government from the perceived inefficiencies of local government. The aim was to co-opt local charities to deliver the

Government's priorities and avoid the capture of new resources by perceived vested interests in local government.

Furthermore, in tune with Moran's concept of hyper-innovation, ministers quickly became frustrated by the apparently slow delivery of policy priorities, and felt compelled to restructure again. Ministers championed more radical steps to break the perceived stranglehold of local government and foster closer integration across organisational and professional boundaries. Boateng spearheaded the case for the restructuring of local children's services. He deemed structural reform necessary to breakdown organisational and professional silos, and specifically challenged the lead role played by SSDs in relation to the co-ordination of child and family welfare services. This culminated in the presentation of new service delivery arrangements in the ECM Green Paper in 2003, which were subsequently mandated under the Children Act 2004.

ECM introduced a tighter framework of policy priorities and targets for local agencies to work towards. Furthermore, the creation of the DCS post in local government fostered loyalty to the ECM programme. Although these reforms were framed in a narrative that promised "strong partnership with local communities" (HM Government 2004: 2), their design and implementation were closely supervised by ministers. This supervision even extended to the re-design of processes for the assessment of individual children's needs and the storage of data – the Contact Point database. This fits Moran's depiction of the British regulatory state as "a characteristically modernist enterprise in its search for synoptic surveillance and control" (2007: 173). Furthermore, ministerial attention intensified following Balls' appointment as Secretary of State in June 2007. Again, seemingly unimpressed with the pace of policy delivery, Balls pushed through further legislation and statutory guidance to specify the form and function of local CSDs and children's trusts. Following Bache (2003), structural reform under ECM is more accurately described as an example of "governing through governance", rather than applying network approaches.

Interestingly, upon taking office Gove promised to free local children's services agencies from the raft of bureaucratic requirements imposed upon them by Labour ministers. As outlined in chapter seven, regulations relating to children's centres, youth services and children's trusts were subsequently relaxed. However, despite the rhetorical claims, this occurred because Gove had de-prioritised these areas of policy, not because he thought ministers should not intervene. At the same time that Gove presided over the de-regulation of Labour's child welfare services, he sought to strengthen central control over the schools'

system. Gove's Academies and Free Schools programme was framed in the same rhetoric of de-regulation, but was clearly aimed at breaking the link between schools and local government. Greater autonomy from local government ran alongside intensive inspection requirements and ongoing reform of the National Curriculum.

However, there was one key example of ministers pulling back from interference in service delivery arrangements during the time period of this study. In the final years of the Labour Government and the early years of the Coalition, ministers turned to representatives of the children's social work profession to lead the development of a new reform programme. As noted in the previous section of this chapter, in the midst of the Baby P crisis, Balls asked Moira Gibb to lead the SWTF. The Government's acceptance of the SWTF's recommendations appeared to herald the beginning of a period of professional renewal. It seemed to signal that ministers were willing to relax hierarchical controls and give professional leaders greater autonomy in key areas such as training, as well greater input into government policy more generally. Significantly, the Coalition minister Tim Loughton, who had been instrumental in pressuring Balls to set up the SWTF, offered the Government's continued support for its recommendations. Furthermore, Loughton also signalled his support for the re-professionalisation of children's social work through the appointment of Professor Munro.

However, this respite for the children's social work profession did not last long. Following Loughton's sacking in September 2012, ministerial micro-management of local service delivery arrangements intensified. Gove rejected the emphasis placed on early intervention and family support by the SWTF, the Munro Review, and enshrined in the Children Act 1989. Rather, he promoted swifter intervention to take children into care with a view to them being adopted. Gove deployed the inspection system and new arrangements for the outsourcing of children's social care services, to ensure compliance with these ideological priorities. These reforms, but particularly the arrangements for outsourcing, were pursued in the face of strong opposition from representatives of the children's social work profession.

Party Leaders and Inter and Intra-Party Political Competition

Both the DPM and the APM downplay the potential role played by party leaders in policy-making. Challenging the 'positional' view of prime ministerial power, Rhodes deploys his power-dependence theory of policy-making to argue that prime ministers are less powerful than often assumed, given their dependence upon policy-making resources they do not

directly control. Moreover, Rhodes claims that the proliferation of policy networks has eroded the capacity of the core executive, "making it less reliant on a command operating code and more reliant on diplomacy" (2007: 1248). Marsh et al accept Rhodes' power dependence theory of policy-making, but reject his claim that resources are widely dispersed within policy networks. In their view "departments are a concentration of political and bureaucratic resources" (2001: 1). Therefore, the core executive is fragmented along departmental lines. Thus, the capacity of the prime minister is limited by his or her dependence on departments, not policy networks. Notwithstanding these differences between the DPM and APM, the important point is that both models imply that party leaders do not directly engage in the every-day process of policy-making.

In contrast, Moran views contemporary policy-making as a more partisan activity. In his view, ministers are less pre-occupied with managing relationships within policy networks or departments than they are with "the short term imperatives of the adversarial battle, and the management of their own careers" (2007: 190). Thus, within the regulatory state the relationship between ministers and party leaders is more central to the policy-making process than it is under the DPM or the APM. In order to protect their careers ministers must demonstrate to party leaders that they can deliver policy change and thereby support the ruling party in the *inter-party competition* for votes. Exley's (2012) and Laffin's (2013) research on education and housing support this view. Both studies highlight the way in which Labour ministers operating in these policy areas had to take account of electoral pressures and the policy priorities of Blair and Brown. Furthermore, the well-documented tensions between Blair and Brown in the Labour area alert us to the challenge that party leaders face in relation to the management of *intra-party competition*. Rose (1974: chapter 12) argued over forty years ago that unified 'electoral parties' are made up of competing 'policy parties', and therefore that intra-party competition is a key determinant of policy. This aspect of policy-making is overlooked in all three of the perspectives on policy-making reviewed in chapter two.

In order to address the issues discussed above, this research considered the question: *To what extent is policy-making informed by the priorities of party leaders and the dynamics of inter and intra-party political competition?* It has been clearly demonstrated in chapters four to six that the social policy positions of Blair and Brown shaped the development of children's services policy. Furthermore, both No 10 and the Treasury played an active role in different aspects of children's policy-making from 1997 onward. Significantly, this involvement

reflected a strong degree of coherence and consistency in the policy positions of Blair and Brown, even though each championed different aspects of children's service policy. Blair famously declared that "education, education, education" was his main policy priority during the 1997 election campaign. In office, he immediately took steps to bolster No 10's capacity to direct education policy and promote a relentless focus on driving up levels of pupil attainment. Blair also quickly pushed for the centralisation of youth justice policy within the Home Office, to support the authoritarian position he had first articulated as Shadow Home Secretary. Both of these priorities were deemed to hold broad electoral appeal, spanning Labour's new middle class supporters as well as the party's traditional working class base.

At the same time, Brown stressed the challenges faced by children growing up in poverty. Labour's child poverty strategy, which was developed and led by the Treasury, focused on tax and benefits reform, but also on investment in public services for children and families living in economically disadvantaged communities. In this sense, Treasury policy reflected a strong linkage with 'old' Labour's redistributive social policy perspective (Shaw 2007). Furthermore, the Treasury followed No 10 in setting up new policy-making mechanisms to progress its social policy priorities. For example, the Treasury set up and managed the Sure Start Review in 1997, and subsequently set up a new inter-departmental policy unit, headed by the former charity chief executive Naomi Eisenstadt, to lead the roll out of the programme. Similarly, it backed the establishment of the inter-departmental CYPU in 2000, to lead on the integration of children's service policy across Whitehall. The CYPU was also staffed with outsiders. But critically, Treasury ministers and officials also exploited their position as the controllers of public spending to influence children's services policy. Civil service outsiders such as Lucy de Groot and Ray Shostak, both recruited from local government, provided the Treasury with a new source of expertise in policy implementation, providing a counterweight to the departments. Boateng, supported by Shostak in particular, used his position as Chief Secretary to the Treasury to build the case for the restructuring of children's services, culminating in the ECM Green Paper and the Children Act 2004.

However, as noted above, Boateng faced strong opposition to his reform proposals from Charles Clarke at the DfES. Moreover, Boateng's ambition to establish a new children's department in Whitehall was ultimately thwarted. The decision to to base the new CYP Directorate within the DfES, as well as the exemption from local children's trust arrangements granted to schools, demonstrated the power of Clarke and education interests in his department. However, it would be premature to conclude that this lends support to

Rhodes' and Marsh et al's perspective on core executive relations. The watering down of Boateng's proposals was not a product of the Treasury's weakness relative to the DfES. Rather, it reflected a disagreement between No 10 and the Treasury regarding the governance of schools. ECM adopted a relatively hierarchical approach to the governance of children's services. All children's trusts were to work towards a framework of centrally determined policy priorities and targets. At the local level, the vision was that all local children's agencies, including schools, would be accountable to children's trusts. However, Blair was not prepared to reverse his commitment to greater autonomy for schools. Thus, the watering down of ECM reflected Blair's continued commitment to existing policy on schools' reform. In other words, it was intra-party competition rather than departmental resistance that constrained the Treasury.

Following the passage of the Children Act 2004, Blair's policy positions also proved to be a significant constraint to the delivery of ECM. Backing for the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils* (HM Government 2005a) showed that Blair continued to view competition between schools and the expansion of choice for parents as essential. In his view this was necessary to drive up levels of pupil attainment and retain middle class support for the state education system. This contradicted the broader focus on child welfare in ECM and the emphasis it placed on greater co-ordination in service delivery, and accountability to children's trusts. Furthermore, Blair also continued to promote an authoritarian populist approach to youth crime and anti-social behaviour, as evidenced by the launch of the *Respect Action Plan* (Home Office 2006). This focus on the behaviour of a small minority of young people, pulled against the emphasis ECM placed on investment in positive activities for all young people, particularly in areas of economic disadvantage. Whilst Blair remained in office, shifts and contradictions in children's services policy reflected disagreements within the party leadership. Thus, ministers had to continuously balance the priorities of No 10 and the Treasury.

To underline this argument about Blair and children's policy, we only need to consider what happened following Blair's departure from office. Following the appointment of Brown's close ally Ed Balls as Secretary of State, the ECM reform programme achieved equal prominence with that of schools' reform in the Department for the first time. Important steps taken included the renaming of the Department to 'Department of Children, Schools and Families'(DCSF), the promotion of the Children's Minister Beverley Hughes to the Cabinet, and the reversal of the exemption from children's trusts arrangements granted to schools

under Blair. Balls also distanced himself from Blair's authoritarian populist approach to youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The Respect Unit set up by Blair in the Home Office was scrapped, and responsibility for all aspects of youth policy moved to the CYP Directorate in the DfES. Without Blair's backing the resistance of education interests in the DfES and youth crime interests in the Home Office was shown to be inconsequential. In summary, during the Labour era, the priorities of Blair and Brown had a significant bearing on the children's services policy-making process. This challenges Rhodes' and Marsh et al's perspective on core executive relations. Both DPM and APM imply that party leaders play only a peripheral role in relation to the every-day policy-making process. Under the DPM this follows the assumption that policy networks are increasingly influencing the policy-making process, whereas under the APM retain the dominant role. It has been argued above that policy-making for children's services was a minister led process. Yet it is clear that in the Labour era, ministers always had to take account of the interests of No 10 and the Treasury in the development of children's services policy.

The centrality of the minister-party leader relationship in the Labour era is consistent with Moran's perspective. In Moran's regulatory state ministers are more deeply embroiled in the partisan battle than either Rhodes or Marsh et al assume. In his view, career minded ministers must continuously appeal to voters and demonstrate their capacity to deliver policy change in order to retain the support of party leaders. On the other hand, the evidence from this research leads us to question Moran's depiction of policy-making as a predominantly chaotic process driven primarily by short-term political imperatives and the dynamics of *inter-party* competition. The tensions and shifts in Labour policy which occurred over three terms in office are consistent with Moran's concept of hyper-innovation. However, these tended to reflect the dynamics of *intra-party* competition. This competition was rooted in the ideological priorities of Blair and Brown, which spilled over into disagreements over institutional arrangements for policy delivery. Significantly, the ideological priorities of Blair and Brown were clearly formulated during the early years of the Labour Government and remained relatively fixed. Moreover, they provided a relatively stable bedrock upon which ministers and others developed policy. Thus, there was much greater ideological coherence in children's policy over three terms of the Labour Government than Moran's thesis predicts.

Having said this, it important to acknowledge that Labour policy-makers were forced to respond to pressure from the Conservatives in the run up to the 2010 election. Making a pitch for the political centre-ground, Cameron declared that social justice would be a key priority

for a future Conservative Government. Following a review of social policy led by Duncan-Smith in opposition, the Conservatives developed a critique of Labour's progressive universal vision for children's services, and called for a sharper focus on children and families experiencing the most acute challenges. The then Shadow Children's Minister Tim Loughton identified neglect of the children's social work profession as a fault-line in Labour policy, and social work reform as a priority for a future Conservative Government. It was against this backdrop that Cameron used the Baby P case to launch an attack on the Brown Government. Balls was forced to concede that Labour had largely overlooked the children's social work profession, and only then asked Moira Gibb to lead the SWTF. Thus, this shift in Labour policy was made primarily in response to pressure from Cameron and the Conservatives. In this sense, it was consistent with Moran's suggestion that ministers embroiled in the partisan battle adopt a short term focus and are compelled to continuously review policy.

In the early years of the Coalition Cameron declared that social justice remained a key priority, despite the Government's commitment to significant cuts to public spending. Importantly, Cameron's position on social justice appeared compatible with the Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg's commitment to improving social mobility. However, the discussion in chapter seven suggests that Cameron, as prime minister, played a less prominent role in relation to children's services policy than his Labour predecessors. Consequently, Gove was granted more autonomy than Labour ministers. Moreover, Gove took advantage of this to drive through his own ideological priorities. On the other hand, we must recognise that even Gove had to remain mindful of the Coalition leaders' social policy priorities, particularly during the early years of the Coalition. Although Gove was clearly the driving force behind Coalition education policy, he did have to accept concessions offered to the Liberal Democrats by Cameron. These included the Pupil Premium, funding for early-years education, and later on free school meals for five to seven year olds. Furthermore, Gove was careful not to publically repudiate the broader focus on child welfare at the heart of the early intervention framework promoted by Duncan-Smith, and which represented a point of continuity with ECM. Rather, Gove followed a strategy of dismantling through arena shifting (Bauer and Knill 2012), evidenced by the de-regulation of this area of policy and only the gradual withdrawal of resources. In relation to social work, Gove was only able to direct policy after September 2012, by which time Cameron's commitment to social justice policy appeared to have waned. Thus, whilst Gove had more autonomy than his ministerial predecessors, Cameron's policy positions still mattered.

On the basis of this case study, it can be argued that research on the policy-making process must focus on the policy priorities of party leaders and the dynamics of inter and intra-party political competition. The policy positions of Blair, Brown and Cameron all had a bearing on the development of children's services policy. The evidence presented in this case study challenges the DPM and APM perspectives on core executive relations. But it also leads us to question the emphasis Moran places on short term political imperatives, and thus a tendency towards policy fiasco in the regulatory state. The policy positions of party leaders, particularly Blair and Brown, provided a degree of ideological coherence to children's policy-making. Moreover, it has been argued that hyper-innovation was in part a product of *intra-party* competitive tensions. Thus, this research has confirmed the continued relevance of Rose's (1974: chapter 12) claim that intra-party competition is a key determinant of policy.

Evidence-based Policy

The final aspect of policy-making investigated in this research was the use of evidence provided by independent experts. This is pertinent because politicians in recent years have sought to publically distance themselves from ideological priorities, declaring their commitment to an 'evidence-based' approach, or simply doing 'what works'. Towards this end central government policy-makers have sought out new sources of expertise beyond Whitehall and established policy networks. Moreover, independent reviews of welfare policy have been a common occurrence in recent years. However, the way in which evidence has actually been used in the policy-making process needs to be considered carefully. Diamond (2014: 262-65) argues that new sources of evidence have not led to significant changes in policy or governing arrangements. On the contrary, he claims that they have been used to support the centralisation of policy-making in Whitehall departments. On the other, hand Moran's (2007) thesis leads us to question this interpretation. He claims that the emergence of new policy-making arenas has in fact supported the politicisation of policy-making, and thus facilitated greater ministerial oversight of departmental policy-making (125).

'Evidence-based' has been a label frequently applied to the children's services policy-making process. This research has therefore provided an opportunity to respond to the question: *How is expert evidence utilised in the policy-making process?* The earliest example of so-called evidence based policy-making in this case study was the Sure Start Review. Ministers claimed that the American Head Start programme provided the initial inspiration for setting up the Review. Head Start had begun in the 1960s and had provided strong evidence of the impact investment in pre-school services could have on outcomes for children in later life.

Furthermore, evaluation of Head Start had also revealed considerable savings for the tax payer over the long run. The Sure Start Review considered this evidence, and how such a programme could be transferred to the English welfare system. Importantly, the Review was chaired by the senior Treasury civil servant Norman Glass, and ministers were not closely involved. Furthermore, the Review considered the evidence and advice of a diverse range of pre-school service providers, particularly those representing the charity sector. Viewed in this light, the Sure Start Review looks like a clear example of policy being shaped by expert evidence. However, it became an intrinsic part of government policy because it supported ministers' ideological priorities. In an interview for this research, Beverley Hughes stated that; "the reason this was a policy priority was to do with our commitment to reducing inequality". Furthermore, the design of the programme reflected Labour ministers' eagerness to commission providers from the children's charity sector as delivery agents, and work around local government provision. This was reflected in the levels of access to central government policy-makers granted to representatives of the charity sector in this period. The lack of robustness in the evidence presented by the charity sector did not seem to matter (interviews with charity leaders). In summary, the evidence presented to the Sure Start Review helped Labour ministers progress a political priority, and distance the Government from the perceived shortcomings of local government.

Historically, independent reviews of children's services policy have followed high profile cases of child abuse. Furthermore, in response to such reviews central government policy-makers have invariably talked about learning the lessons of apparent policy failure and committed the Government to the implementation of expert recommendations. This is consistent with the punctuated equilibrium theory of policy change. This theory suggests that change tends to occur at 'critical junctures', or 'windows of opportunity', when established policies are severely challenged. Chapter five looked in detail at challenge to children's services policy provided by the Victoria Climbié Inquiry chaired by Lord Laming (2003). The Labour Government presented ECM (HM Government 2003a) as a direct response to Lord Laming's recommendations. It is clear that following the inquiry child safeguarding did become a much higher policy priority. Safeguarding became one of the five key ECM priorities, alongside health, education, crime and anti-social behaviour and employability which already commanded significant ministerial attention. Furthermore, following the inquiry important changes to the way in which local agencies were required to assess and respond to potential safeguarding concerns were made.

However, the influence of Lord Laming's inquiry over the ECM reform process did not match the claims made in the Government's official narrative. Firstly, positioned alongside the other four outcomes, child safeguarding did not achieve the level of political prioritisation Lord Laming had called for. Significantly, his call for a new central agency to lead on safeguarding policy was ignored. Instead the reform of central and local government structures was designed to progress the Treasury's broader child welfare agenda. Secondly, the principle of progressive universalism underpinning ECM detracted from the crisis in children's social work highlighted in the inquiry. The focus on the role of universal services meant that children's social work was assigned only a peripheral role in the new arrangements. Moreover, ministers cited the evidence in Lord Laming's report to bolster the case for the structural reform. This made it more difficult for those sceptical of the need for reform to mount a successful defence of existing arrangements. In this sense Lord Laming's inquiry supported the progression of a pre-existing political commitment.

In contrast, the period between the Baby P crisis of November 2008 and the sacking of the Conservative Children's Minister Tim Loughton in September 2012, saw government policy-makers listen more carefully to the evidence of children's social work experts. In the years following the passage of the Children Act 2004, Loughton, then Shadow Children's Minister, identified the neglect of children's social work as a major weakness in Labour policy. He subsequently invited representatives of the profession to contribute to the Conservative Party commission on children's social work. The Commission's report, titled *No More Blame Game: The Future for Children's Social Workers* (Conservative Party 2007), formed the basis of Conservative Party policy on children's services in the run up to the 2010 election. As noted above, under pressure from the Conservatives during the Baby P crisis, Balls commissioned Moira Gibb to set up the SWTF to review this neglected area of Labour policy. The SWTF's recommendations were broadly in line with those of the earlier Conservative Party Commission, and were accepted in full by Balls. Balls also commissioned Lord Laming to conduct a review of progress made nationally in relation to the implementation of child protection procedures introduced since the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.

Furthermore, in the early days of the Coalition Government, Cameron clearly sought to convey the impression that social policy more widely would follow 'what works'. He commissioned two Labour MPs to lead reviews of child poverty policy (Field 2010) and early intervention policy (Allen 2011). Allen's review in particular emphasised the need for an evidence-based and less ideological approach to social policy. Furthermore, Cameron acted

upon one of Allen's key recommendations, agreeing to provide financial support for a new Early Intervention Foundation to improve the evidence-base for the commissioning of children's services. He also announced the Troubled Families programme as a response, in part, to lessons learnt following the August 2011 riots. Cameron also supported Loughton's decision to offer the Government's continued support for the recommendations of the SWTF, and Loughton's suggestion that Professor Munro be appointed to carry out a review of government policy and procedures relating to child protection. The period of transition between the Labour and Coalition Governments, was marked by an apparent willingness within government to listen to the advice of independent experts.

However, the development of children's services policy in this period was more politically charged than this initial assessment suggests. As noted above, the setting up of the Conservative Party Commission on Children's Social Work in 2007 highlighted a major weakness in Labour's ECM policy framework. This is not to question the motivation of Loughton, or his personal commitment to working with the children's social work profession. However, what is clear is that the work of the Commission provided the basis for Cameron's attack on the Labour Government and Haringey social workers during the Baby P crisis. Cameron ignored the message in the title of the Commission's report – 'No More Blame Game' (Conservative Party 2007). Furthermore, Balls' new found eagerness to listen to representatives of children's social work profession was a direct response to political pressure from the Conservatives. It seems clear that the SWTF would not have been created had Cameron not seized upon the Baby P case to pressure the Labour Government. Significantly, the terms of reference for Laming's 2009 review precluded any critique of Labour's response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. Balls' use of Lord Laming's report provides a good example of how expert evidence can provide a useful resource in the context of the "politics of blame avoidance" (Weaver 1986).

Significantly, Cameron's commitment to the reform programme developed by the children's social work profession, and championed by Loughton, did not hold firm. In September 2012 Cameron agreed to the replacement of Loughton as Children's Minister, and left the path clear for Gove to abandon the reform programme developed by professional experts. As noted above, Gove turned to a small group of advisers from outside the social work profession to support the progression of his ideological priorities. He did nonetheless judge it expedient to proclaim his ongoing commitment to implementation of Professor Munro's recommendations, even though he had clearly refused to commit to one of her key

recommendations regarding the early help role of local authorities (Munro 2011). Gove also followed the familiar strategy of highlighting the apparent failures of children's services agencies to protect children, such as Victoria Climbié, Peter Connelly (Baby P) and Khyra Ishaq, to justify policy change.

More broadly, Osborne's deficit reduction plan placed severe constraints on social policy and tested Cameron's commitment to social justice. In commissioning expert led policy reviews, Cameron aimed to soften the messages coming from the Treasury in the early days of the Coalition Government, and demonstrate that the Party would remain committed to a pro-active social policy programme. This was necessary to try and maintain the Party's position on the electoral middle ground, but also in order to demonstrate the compatibility of Conservative and Liberal Democrat social policy. This also supports the conclusion that ministers and party leaders under both the Labour and Coalition Government's strategically deployed expert evidence to support their policy priorities.

Conclusion

This research has responded to the overarching question set out in chapter two: *To what extent is British policy-making driven by policy networks, Whitehall departments or political actors?* In response it has been demonstrated that policy-making for children's services under both the Labour and Coalition Governments was primarily driven by political actors (ministers and party leaders). Moreover, this case study has lent strong support to Moran's thesis of the British regulatory state, and challenged the emphasis placed on the role of policy networks under Rhodes' DPM, and on Whitehall departments under Marsh et al's APM. It has been demonstrated that ministers active in this policy area frequently promoted substantial reform of policy priorities and service delivery arrangements, aiming to centralise control over all aspects of policy. Furthermore, it has been argued that ministerial activity in relation to children's services policy can only be understood in relation to the policy positions of party leaders and the dynamics of inter and intra-party political competition. Thus, it has been suggested that the boundaries of the political and administrative domains of government are more blurred than the DPM and APM imply. It has also been argued that the opening up of policy-making to new sources of independent expertise has supported, not detracted, from the politicisation of policy-making. In summary, the key theoretical propositions that have emerged from this research are:

- The importance of ministers' ideological priorities and the prominent role played by ministers in driving policy initiatives in Whitehall;
- Policy network access to, and influence over, the policy-making process is limited to technical areas of policy and closely tied to the priorities and attitudes of individual ministers;
- The ubiquity of public sector restructuring aimed at strengthening political control over service delivery and limiting the autonomy of local agencies and public service professionals;
- The importance of the wider party political context to the policy-making process, but specifically the policy positions of party leaders and the dynamics of inter and intra-party political competition; and
- Expert evidence is used to promote policy reform, or defend existing policies, whilst downplaying ideological motivations.

As this research has only examined one area of policy, further research into other areas following a similar methodological approach is needed to test the generalisability of these propositions. Nonetheless, this case study of children's services policy has demonstrated the value of in depth longitudinal research into a specific area of policy. The time-frame adopted has allowed for the observation of a number of important shifts in policy. The participation of a wide-range of elite policy-makers including politicians, civil servants, non-governmental interest groups and independent experts, has provided rich empirical detail and supported the development of new theoretical insights into contemporary British policy-making.

Appendix – Chronology of Key Events and Publications

May 1997	Labour election victory
	Paul Boateng appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in DoH (responsible for social services)
July 1997	*Excellence in Schools* (DfEE 1997)
July 1998	CSR - £450m committed to pilot 250 *Sure Start* programmes over three years (HM Treasury 1998)
October 1998	Boateng appointed Minister of State in Home Office (responsible for youth policy)
November 1998	*Supporting Families* strategy (Home Office 1998)
December 1998	*Modernising Social Services* (DoH 1998)
March 1999	Blair announces target to abolish child poverty by 2020
March 2000	*Policy Action Team 12: Young People* (SEU 2000)
July 2000	Spending review - £450m committed over 5 years to create the *Children's Fund*
September 2000	CYPU set up – reporting to Boateng
May 2001	Victoria Climbié Inquiry begins
June 2001	Boateng appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury
November 2001	*Building a Strategy for Children and Young People* (CYPU 2001)
December 2001	*Tackling Child Poverty* (HM Treasury 2001)
My 2002	Boateng appointed Chief Secretary to the Treasury
July 2002	Spending review – includes *Children at Risk Review* (HM Treasury 2002)
September 2002	ECM Green Paper process begins
October 2002	Charles Clarke appointed Secretary of State for Education
January 2003	Victoria Climbié Inquiry published (Laming 2003)

July 2003	New Children and Young People's Directorate established in DfES
	Margaret Hodge appointed Children's Minister
September 2003	*Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003a) published
July 2004	Spending review - £500m per year committed to establish 3,500 *Sure Start* Children's Centres
November 2004	Children Act 2004
December 2004	*ECM: Change for Children* (HM Government 2004)
	Ruth Kelly appointed Secretary of State for Education
May 2005	Beverley Hughes appointed Children's Minister
October 2005	*Higher Standards Better Schools for All* (HM Government 2005a)
December 2005	David Cameron elected leader of the Conservative Party
January 2006	*Respect Action Plan* (Home Office 2006)
December 2006	*Breakdown Britain* (Conservative Parry SJPG 2006)
June 2007	Gordon Brown replaces Tony Blair as Prime Minister
	Ed Balls appointed Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
July 2007	*Breakthrough Britain* (Conservative Party SJPG 2007)
October 2007	*No More Blame Game: The Future for Children's Social Workers* (Conservative Party 2007)
December 2007	*The Children's Plan* (DCSF 2007)
October 2008	*Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens* (Allen and Duncan-Smith 2008)
November 2008	Cameron raises the 'Baby P' case at Prime Ministers' Question Time
	Balls sacks Haringey CSD Director Sharon Shoesmith, commissions second Laming review, and sets up Social Work Taskforce
December 2009	Social Work Reform Board established
March 2010	Child Poverty Act 2010

May 2010	Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government formed
	Michael Gove appointed Secretary of State for Education
	Tim Loughton appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
	Emergency budget
July 2010	*21st Century Welfare* (DWP 2010)
October 2010	Spending Review (HM Treasury 2010)
November 2010	*The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010)
December 2010	*The Foundation Years* (Field 2010)
January 2011	*Early Intervention: The Next Steps* (Allen 2011)
April 2011	*A New Approach to Child Poverty* (HM Government 2011b)
May 2011	*The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report* (Munro 2011)
March 2012	*Social Justice: Transforming Lives* (HM Government 2012)
September 2012	Loughton sacked (replaced by Edward Timpson)
November 2012	*The Failure of Child Protection and the Need for a Fresh Start* (Gove 2012)
April 2013	Early Intervention Foundation established
November 2013	*Getting it Right for Children in Need* (Gove 2013)
February 2014	*Making the Education of Social Workers Consistently Effective* (Narey 2014)
April 2014	Six-week consultation on proposals for the outsourcing of children's social work opened

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